THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF EDUCATING IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE CONTEXTS

By

Rachel Adenike Adeodu ©

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submitted to the faculty of graduate studies and research in partial
fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Dedicated to
the loving memory of:

my mother, Mrs. T. M. Ayangbayi,
for her life and her devotion to God, her family and to others;

and my father, Pa S. F. Ayangbayi,
who taught me to reach for the stars.

ABSTRACT

The Province of Alberta, like many other provinces in Canada, has witnessed a phenomenal growth in the immigration of people from non-European countries in the last two decades. The children of these new immigrants, whose cultural backgrounds are often quite different from those of their teachers, find their way into Alberta's schools where most of the teachers are from an Anglo-Saxon, European background. These differences in the cultural background of teachers and students present a potential for misunderstanding and cultural conflict in the classroom. By examining demographic shifts in immigration to Alberta, and employing some autobiographical stories of my own family's struggles within a new country and culture, I raise questions and issues about how teachers and schools respond to culturally different children.

This study then was an attempt to uncover teachers' understandings of educating children who are culturally different. It asks: how do we respond to the cultural "other" within our classrooms?

The mode of research employed in this study is action research, a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken to uncover and interpret inequities within society and reflected in schools, in order to come to a deeper level of self-understanding and thus improve one's own teaching practices. The participants, all experienced teachers, were from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Through the narrating of experiences during group conversations, the self and collective interpretations of the narratives, reflective journal writing and conversational interviews, participants became aware of their tacit assumptions, providing pedagogical insights into their practice. Participants constructed their identities as the cultural other, examined power relations between dominant and minority group members and came to understand their own biases. Participants also discussed the need to create a climate of trust as they interact with students and their parents, the need to negotiate conflicting paths, and the necessity to make efforts to respect and affirm cultural differences. The reflective journal writing, as well as the individual and collective interpretation of stories and experiences also served as a catalyst to a deeper level of self-understanding and transformation in participants' teaching lives.

Implications of this study for educators and teacher education were discussed. Recommendations made include recruiting preservice teachers from minority cultural backgrounds, hiring a culturally diverse teaching staff in schools and faculties of education, and mandating courses in multicultural education for all preservice teachers.

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> *Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, and they will walk and not be faint.*
>
> *(Isaiah 40:28-31).*

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Prologue

The Space From Which I Write

The research for this study was carried out in 1992. My research topic developed out of my passion for fairness and justice for children who come from other countries, particularly countries regarded by those in the West as the "Third World". Although it has been a while since the research was carried out, this topic is apt for all time, for as long as parents of children from other countries continue to come to Canada to seek a more stable life for themselves and their children. The topic was apt at the time of the study, but it is even more so now for several reasons. On the world stage, we witness the unspeakable consequences of ethnic and racial hatred in Rwanda, South Africa, Sri Lanka and the former Yugoslavia. Just south of the Canadian border, we witness the debate and racial volatility that characterize the O. J. Simpson trial, the Los Angeles Police Department and the recent racially motivated riots in Florida. Closer to home, we witness the murder of a Somali youth at the hands of some Canadian soldiers, and the racial tensions that occur as a result of the deaths of Black youth at the hands of the Toronto police. Over the years, Canada has opened her doors, and has served as a refuge for many who are fleeing from ethnic cleansing, genocide, persecution, war, famine, or economic depression. While many people had immigrated to Canada in the same way from Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, more immigrants are now coming from Asia, Africa and South America. As a result, we are beginning to witness a phenomenal demographic shift in the Canadian population.

An autobiographical background for this study is provided in chapter I. I had been involved in a doctoral program in elementary education and had completed my research before a new job took me away from Edmonton to Alaska. It soon became very clear to me that the State of Alaska was also struggling with issues of fairness and justice for Alaska Natives and other minorities in the state. As is the case here in Canada, the struggle with these issues were also manifested in the educational system. The debate raged around a fundamental philosophical difference: should the directive for the education of rural Alaska (populated mostly by Alaska Natives) come from urban areas like Anchorage and Fairbanks (populated mostly by non-indigenous peoples), or should the rural Alaskans be given the opportunity to set their own course of action and determine the kind of education that they want for their children? At the most fundamental level, the issue is racial and also cultural.

This issue was also evident in the teacher education program which invites students from three categories. There are those who come from the

"Lower 48" (the 48 contiguous states), many already veteran teachers who come either for the adventure or to start a new life, but who have to take some courses to meet the State of Alaska Certification requirements. The second category are the preservice teachers, many of who are taking courses toward their education degree. Within this category, there are those who already have a degree in some other field of study, but have come with their working spouses to Alaska. Finding themselves in bush Alaska, and not being able to find work in their specialized fields, they come into the education field so that they can find teaching positions, which are nearly always available due to a high turnover rate in the bush. Then there are those who are taking their initial degree courses in teacher education. The third category are teachers who come to take courses either for professional development or for continued certification purposes. Of all these categories of students, 80% were White, and 20% were Alaska Native. For those who would like to teach in the State, courses on educating children of indigenous peoples, sensitivity to people of other cultural backgrounds, understanding of Alaska Native Land Settlement Act and rights and similar courses are required by the State of Alaska for certification or licensure (as it is now called). Thus, issues of how to educate other peoples' children, of equal access vis-à-vis equal opportunity in education, of who makes what decisions, and therefore who has power and control are issues that are of paramount importance.

Two separate and unrelated events have given me a new and fresher perspective to this study. The first was the near fatal accident of our son in 1993. At a very difficult period in our lives, many people, friends, neighbors, teachers, advisors, ministers, people known and unknown to us, Canadian and non-Canadian, all rallied around us to provide us with the emotional support that we so badly needed at the time. The abundant love, goodwill and prayers that we received so generously helped us get through that difficult time. The hope brought about by peoples' acts of kindness and sensitivity was very powerful, and as a result some of my past negative experiences no longer mattered.

The second event was my experience with students in my classes in Alaska who faced similar situations as many teachers here in Alberta. They asked similar questions, some were encountering a new and totally different culture in their classrooms and communities for the first time. As an instructor and advisor, I became a sounding board, the person to whom many turned for suggestions as to how to motivate students and turn on learning or deal with a gnawing classroom situation in a culturally different environment. I became aware, in a different kind of way, of the struggles that these teachers must deal with both personally and professionally. For some, the period of adjustment was short and uncomplicated, for some, it was long and arduous, and yet for others, it was simply unbearable! Whether or not the new environment was bearable depended on personal dispositions, on change in perceptions, assumptions and attitudes, and on the willingness to learn as well as teach.

As a result of this diversified and newer perspective, I am able to see some of those assumptions that I brought into this study which I did not see before. I am able to understand some of the nuances in our group conversations and "hear" words that were unspoken, but woven among all of us through gestures, a nodding of the head, a smile, or a downturn of the eyes. I have come to understand some of my own limitations and attitudes. It is with this newer perspective that I now approach the analysis and interpretation of my data.

Chapter I

Introducing the Study

A. Introduction

This study derives from a twofold background: the autobiographical and the demographic. The autobiographical background reveals my own and my family's personal experiences within a new and different cultural milieu that is predominantly White and Anglo-Saxon. It reveals our struggles to fit into this new environment, and the pain of watching our children being misunderstood within the Canadian School system.

The demographic background examines the shift, particularly the change in the color of immigration in Canada, and in Alberta particularly, and its implications for educators in Alberta's schools.

1. Autobiographical Background

This study has evolved primarily out of our children's experiences as newcomers to Canada, and to the Canadian School, and my desire to increase teachers' understanding of children from cultures that are non-White and non-Anglo. By the time our son entered into one of Alberta's schools, he had already had preschool and first grade education in our country, Nigeria. In Nigeria, he had gone to one of our cities' University Staff Schools, which attracted the most qualified elementary school teachers in the city. The children sat in neat rows in their own little desks, and spoke or answered questions only when called upon by the teacher to do so. Children usually had homework on work-sheets several times a week. They did what they were asked to do, with little room or encouragement to question or challenge the teacher's thinking. English grammar and the mechanics of language were taught very traditionally. By the end of the second grade, the children are well versed in reciting the multiplication table. Little provision was made for the exploration of, and the understanding of the meaning of concepts being taught. A teacher felt that s/he had good control of the classroom on the basis of how quiet, orderly and busy his/her students were.

Within Nigeria's very structured school system, where elementary school children had term examinations and received report cards based on a grade system, our son thrived and excelled. However, with this kind of environment, not only was his and other children's creativity stifled, they also learned the art of competing with each other at an early age. This sort of education is reminiscent of the education that I also had where all knowledge was seen as objectively existent and to be gained. With this view of knowledge, teachers saw children's minds as a "tabula rasa", a blank slate, to be filled with knowledge provided by their teaching. Our experiences of six years as children, our natural ways of learning were not considered, and learning was mainly by rote. There were other twists to my own education. I was being taught in a language that was foreign to me, and being taught about concepts and places that I had neither experienced, nor could experience at that time. For example, when the concept of snow was being taught in relation to seasons in my first grade, I had neither experienced snow nor could I experience it immediately even if I had wanted to. I came to understand the concept that I was taught in my first grade class twenty-three years later, when I went to Scotland for a master's degree. I still remember the excitement and the awe of experiencing snow for the first time. Like our son, I had little opportunity for making connections and understanding some of the concepts that I was being taught.

The foregoing description was my experience of Nigeria's school system, which was our legacy from the British colonial government. The curriculum was extremely narrow, and it served the interests of the colonial government. Three and a half decades after independence, we remain un-emancipated in our thinking about the kind of education system imposed upon us by the colonial government. Our school system continues to serve the same purpose for which the colonial government took over and supported schools founded by the missionaries, which was to prepare a few people to take up positions in the civil service. We continue to embrace the dominant British history and perspective as our own, relegating to the background our own historical background, cultural traditions and languages within our school system.

When our children came to Canada, they were bilingual. They spoke English with good grammar, and also spoke Yoruba, our first language. Their English accent was of course different. Like others who have learnt to speak English as a second language, we have stretched and modified the language to accommodate our own needs, and have transferred our first language tonal system on to English. With language not a barrier, we expected our children to adjust very quickly to the Canadian school system.

We were proved wrong. Our children were struggling, finding it difficult to adjust to a new learning environment. It became very difficult for a child who had been used to structure, and for whom school meant doing what the teacher says to go into a learning environment with several learning centers from which he could choose. Choice was not a familiar term within the classroom environment, and cooperative learning was a new phenomenon for a child who had been used to competing for the top position. He was also labeled as having a loud voice, and attempts were made to teach him to speak more quietly. The only problem was that in the attempt to do so, a once "confident and extroverted" child, who was "always ready and willing to express himself in great detail" (grade two, first term report card) became extremely quiet, self-conscious and unsure of himself by the end of his first school year in Canada. He was no longer eager to go to school in the mornings. He had been stifled.

Our older daughter was just starting Kindergarten within the Canadian school system at the same time. While her "self-concept continues to be positive" (Kindergarten report card), we were told that she did not make eye contact and was therefore lacking in self-confidence.

On reflecting about our son's loud voice, and our daughter's discomfort with making eye contact, I concluded that these were cultural characteristics. In Nigeria, for a male child to have a loud voice is culturally acceptable and tacitly encouraged. It is regarded as a sign of confidence and assertiveness. I reflected on how the school inadvertently encourages the development of a loud voice, and saw that it was inherent in the way that most school activities were conducted in Nigeria. Apart from class time, all other activities took place on the school grounds rather than a gymnasium. With the lack of microphones, it was imperative to project one's voice in order to capture the attention of those being addressed. The same was true of the end of year activities, when thousands of parents and other relatives were in attendance. A child who was making a presentation had to project his/her voice so the audience could follow what was being presented. The child with the loudest voice and who was able to captivate the audience, would get the longest and loudest applause, so all children do the best they can to get that applause.

In thinking about the loud voice in my culture, I saw that the same admiration is not accorded to females with loud voices. Where it is a mark of self-confidence, leadership, and a high self-esteem among males, it is regarded with disdain in females. It is seen as impetuous, because females are expected and encouraged to be bashful. Part of being bashful and therefore being a true and respectable female, is to avoid making eye contact with anyone that is seen as being in a position of authority. Teachers are seen as authority figures, who may not be questioned, disobeyed, or disrespected. Making eye contact with an authority figure, even by a male child, in my culture is most certainly disrespectful and contemptuous. Thus, whereas in the world view of our daughter's teacher avoidance of eye contact meant lack of confidence, from our daughter's understanding of cultural expectations, it was her way of being the best female that she could be. My reflections also revealed that much of this cultural awareness in our children did not happen through structured or planned instruction in our home, or even by discussion. Much of this awareness was absorbed through the pores much in the same way that it happens within any culture.

My family's experiences within a totally new and different culture encouraged me to reflect on and examine some aspects of our culture that had hitherto been taken for granted. My reflections reminded me of some of my own personal struggles as a female within a male dominated faculty of education, as one of only two female faculty among a forty-member faculty of education, and the only female within one of its departments. I remembered the constant tension between the cultural expectation to behave as a bashful, noncompetitive female within a department made up of only men, and the expectation to behave in accordance with the culture of the university; which was to be competitive, get involved in the rat race, and be able to defend whatever position I had on issues.

There were some other environmental factors that contributed to walking this tight rope. For example, in one of my university classes, there were as many as two hundred students in an Educational Foundations course which I taught. This class took place in a big lecture hall which was not equipped with any microphone, and the only way for the students to hear whatever I said was for me to project my voice. Thus, although it was inappropriate for me as a female to speak with a loud voice, I had to develop a loud voice in teaching. I also had to establish eye contact with individual students during the course of a lecture in order to determine their level of involvement in the class (in this case, just listening to the lecture). In my mind, the two "taboos" for females were a means of controlling the class. As a female working within a man's world as it were, I had to engage in these strategies in order to survive in that world.

In my graduate program at the University of Alberta, I was involved in a graduate level course on home/school and community relations in which I explored the importance of building bridges between the home and school by enhancing cultural understanding. For my project in this graduate course, I developed a brochure that was widely circulated to schools, homes and various organizations. I also developed and offered workshops to some schools, day care centers, and students in both the undergraduate and graduate education programs at the University.

Response from teachers in the schools, parents, my fellow graduate students and seniors in the undergraduate education program indicated a "need for more training in this area of cultural understanding". These responses, as well as the pain of watching our own children's struggles to survive in this new environment and feeling misunderstood and unaccepted, led to my desire to enter into a dialogue with classroom teachers about what it means to educate in diverse cultural contexts. It seemed important to explore the possibility this dialogue has for understanding our pedagogical thoughtfulness and relationship with our students. Brimfield, Roderick and Yamamoto (1983) wrote: "[O]ne"s research career is unmistakably a reflection of the person that he or she has been.

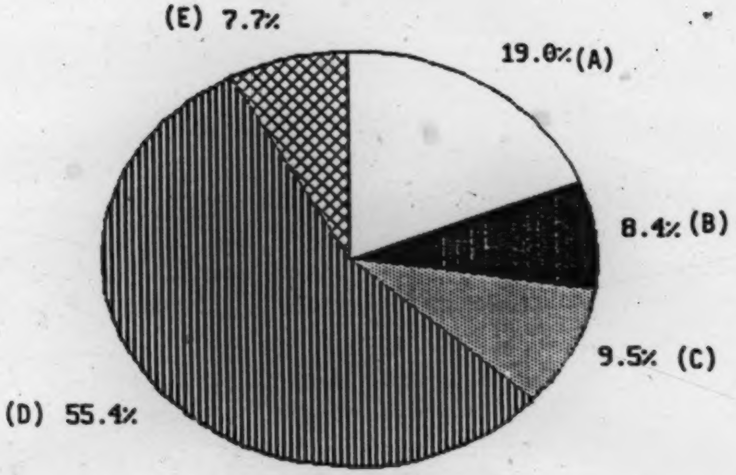
Of all the possibilities, one raises only certain questions, pursues only certain approaches, and reads the results in only certain ways" (p. 15). My interest and experience in issues of cultural differences both personally and as a teacher further affirmed my choice of this topic of research. Osborne (1990) addresses this notion of reflection on and experience with the subject matter. He stated that "The researcher is well advised to engage in extended reflection on the determination of the question. A prior understanding of the phenomenon of interest usually arises from the researcher's experience" (p. 81). My research then explores with other teachers what it means to teach in culturally diverse contexts, particularly teaching children who are culturally and racially different. In pursuing this joint exploration, I believed that there was a chance to better understand why we, teachers, teach the way we do in such contexts, and an opportunity to encourage a deeper self-understanding, that might in turn lead to change in our lives, as well as change in the way we teach.

2. The Demographical: Change in the Color of Immigration.

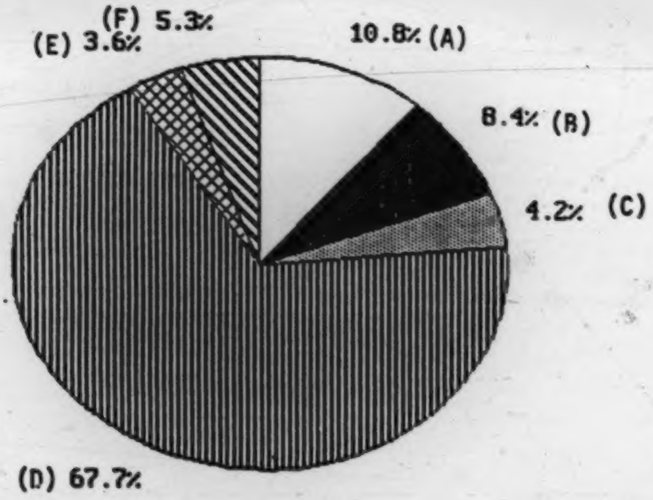
Teaching within diverse cultural contexts has been a major area of investigation within the last two and a half decades in Canada, and even much longer in England and the United States of America (USA). While the USA and some parts of England have had very large populations that are of nonwhite, non-Anglo Saxon backgrounds, the same has not been true of Canada (particularly Alberta, the location which provides the context for this study).

There have been major demographic shifts in Alberta's population only within the last two decades. In the last decade alone, there has been a major influx of new immigrants arriving from non-European countries, also sometimes called nontraditional source countries to Alberta. Citizenship and Immigration Canada provides some statistics about immigration to Alberta in the last decade. According to the statistics, in 1994 alone, 67.7% of immigrants came from the Asia/Pacific region, whereas in 1984 the region accounted for 55.4%. Also, since 1984 immigration from Central and South America has doubled from 4.2% to 8.4%. There appears to be no increase in the percentage of immigrants from Africa and the Middle East between 1984 and 1994. However, Between 1980 and 1990, immigration from Africa and the Middle East almost doubled from 6.7% to 12%. By contrast, immigration from Europe and the United States declined considerably between 1984 and 1994. Whereas immigration from the United States and Europe accounted for 7.7% and 19% respectively in 1984, in 1994 it comprised only 3.6% and 10.8% respectively (see Figure 1). These figures show a sharp decline in immigration from Europe and the United States during this period.

(A) IMMIGRATION BY WORLD AREA, 1984
(Total Number = 10670)

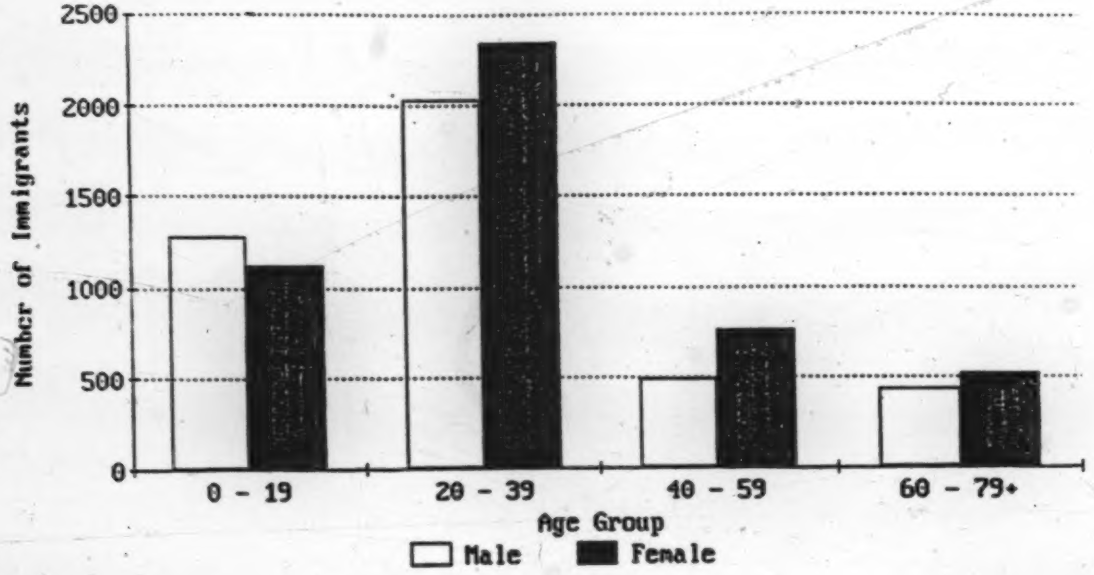


(B) IMMIGRATION BY WORLD AREA, 1994
(Preliminary Total Number = 17551)

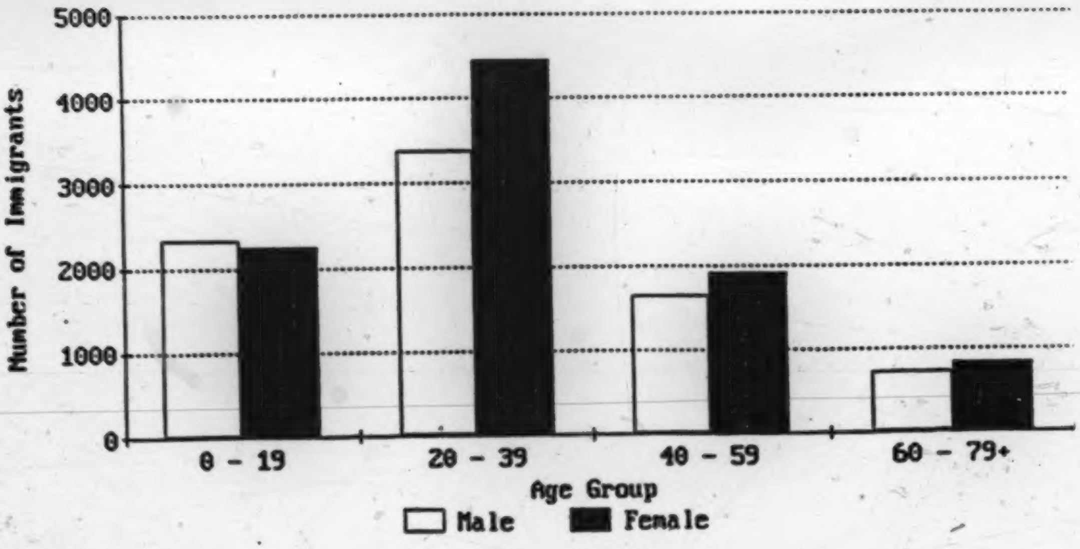


A = Europe
B = Africa and the Middle East
C = Central & South America and the Caribbean
D = Asia and the Pacific
E = The United States of America
F = Other Areas

Figure 1: Immigration to Alberta By World Area, 1984 & 1994
(Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada)



(A) IMMIGRATION BY AGE GROUP & GENDER, 1985



(B) IMMIGRATION BY AGE GROUP & GENDER, 1994
(Preliminary Statistics)

Figure 2: Immigration to Alberta by Age Group and Gender
1985 & 1994, (Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada)

Of significance also is the age group of immigrants to Alberta. As Figure 2 shows, the largest number of immigrants in 1994 are between the ages of twenty to thirty nine. These data are of tremendous significance for a variety of reasons. First, the highest numbers of immigrants to Alberta are coming from non-European countries, and are also from tremendously diverse regions, mostly non-Caucasian and non-English speaking, resulting in a massive shift in the racial and linguistic composition of Alberta. Secondly, a look at the age group of the largest number of immigrants suggests that they are in their prime. Some arrive with families, and it is expected that many who do not yet have families will do so. Therefore, these children at the age of five would enter Alberta's school system.

These statistics have great implications for teachers, school administrators, and counselors whose racial, cultural and language backgrounds may be completely different from those of these children. It also has implications for school curriculum, school policies, pedagogy, and for teacher education in institutions of higher learning. Some of these implications will be explored in chapter five, but because of the changing color of immigration, there appears to be a tremendous urgency to examine beliefs and perspectives about race, gender, class and ethnicity, especially in light of the racial tensions mentioned earlier. As educators, we need to reexamine our beliefs about "otherness" which we bring with us into our teaching situations, and reflect on how we are preparing for the arrival of these children.

B. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to conduct an inquiry into teaching in diverse cultural contexts, with the secondary goal of explaining how we might increase our understanding of children who are non-White, non-English speaking, non-male, and non-middle class. This was accomplished by interpreting the stories of, and dialogue among, nine educators in a seminar setting, as well as through further conversations held with individual educators on different occasions, in a variety of locations.

Through reflection on my family's personal experiences of a new environment and school culture along with the demographic shift that we observe in our schools, some questions become important as we think of the implications that these issues have for us as a society and for our schools in particular. The major question this study inquires into is: how do teachers interact with, and respond to children who come from cultural backgrounds different from the so-called mainstream (White, middle-class) backgrounds? The essence of this question centers around what it means to educate in culturally diverse contexts and how, by exploring together, we can come to a deeper self-understanding, and perhaps a change in our sensitivity to, and relationship with our students.

C. Significance of the Study

The background to this study reveals that there is a need for increased understanding of children from minority cultural backgrounds through critical reflection of teaching practice. This study has a social reconstructionist intention which emphasizes reflection about the tacit inequities within our school systems. For example, a social reconstructionist view may attempt to uncover inequities in the values and interests served by the structures of schooling and assessment of classroom actions. It examines the potential of these actions to contribute toward greater equity, social justice, and humane conditions in schooling and society (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Zeichner, 1987; Beyer, 1986). The "diet, dress and dance" views of minority children's heritage and culture, which dominate the once-a-year multicultural nights in many elementary schools within Alberta provide an inadequate basis for our understanding of education in culturally diverse contexts, and for uncovering tacit inequities.

This study is important in that it is about teachers working and learning together for better ways to meet the needs of all children. It is about teachers seeking to grow professionally in our knowledge and sensitivity towards children from minority cultures by uncovering those tacit assumptions we hold. While very recent literature from the United States contains information about the use of action research in preservice teacher education (Gore and Zeichner, 1990; Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1992), few such studies using action research have been done here in Canada (Pawluk, 1994) in relation to how teachers' understanding of culturally and racially different students might be increased. This study is an addition to this list. It represents the use of action research by a group of Canadian educators in seeking a deeper self-understanding and change in the way they view, and relate to, their students. An additional significance of this study is of personal benefit in that it provides me with the opportunity to uncover my own taken-for-granted assumptions about my own cultural and colonial experiences, and how these experiences have contributed to who I am, what I think, my personal stock of knowledge and my view of the world. It has led to greater self-understanding, and therefore a more responsible and thoughtful way of relating to my own students in what van Manen (1991) refers to as "pedagogical responsibility".

D. Organization of the Study

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the study by placing it within a twofold background, the personal and the cultural, from which the research has evolved. This is followed by a statement of the research purpose and the significance of the study. In chapter two, I first examine the thing of culture and my own location within it. I then provide a brief historical overview of multiculturalism on the Canadian scene, and review the literature on multicultural education, making it problematic and showing that many current approaches to educating children in culturally diverse contexts are inadequate. Thus the intent here is to provide a critical basis for searching for a deeper way of understanding and consequently educating these children.

Chapter three has two parts. In the first, I examine the use of action research in reaching a deeper level of self-understanding. In the second part, I describe my research journey, and how the study evolved. In chapter four, I develop in the form of themes, participants' understandings of what it means to educate children who are racially and culturally different. In chapter five, I reflect on what the research has meant to me as a person, an educator and a researcher. I then examine the implications of this study for educators, and for teacher education.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

> Multicultural education is by definition expansive. Because it is *about* all people, it is also *for* all people, regardless of their ethnicity, language, religion, gender, race, or class. (Nieto, 1996, p.313)

A. Introduction

This chapter examines the thing of culture, race and ethnicity as social constructs and how issues regarding these concepts have been and are being addressed on the Canadian scene. In order to provide a context for understanding and analyzing issues, the terms used in this chapter are defined so that there is a shared understanding. Multiculturalism and consequently multicultural education evolved as an antidote to the policy of assimilation which was enforced through the medium of the school. A study of multicultural education is incomplete without examining issues of culture, race and ethnicity and how a person's access to power, wealth and prestige in Canadian society is based on a combination of these three factors. Thus in this chapter, I define these and other related concepts, examining my own location within culture.

Secondly, I examine the concept of multiculturalism on the Canadian scene and the various approaches to multicultural education. This examination reveals the limitations and problematic nature of the term and the educational approaches. Consequently, there have been the calls for a redefinition of multicultural education (Ghosh, 1996, Neito, 1996) and for alternative ways of preparing teachers to teach diverse learners (McDiarmid, 1992). The intent here is to provide a critical framework, thus creating new possibilities, through action research, for a deeper understanding of how we, educators, relate to the cultural other in our practice.

1. The Thing of Culture

James defines culture as "the way a given society organizes and conducts itself that distinguishes it from other societies" (James 1995, p.2). Culture is an ever-changing, dynamic and complex set of values, beliefs, norms, social and political relationships, and world-view created and shared by a group of people. The group of people are not only bound together by a combination of factors which may include a common history, geographic location, linguistic expressions, patterns of thinking, styles of communication, social class and/or religion, but also transform these shared cultural characteristics (Nieto, 1996).

Thus, members of any given society will not only be influenced by the culture of that society, but also contribute to, and transform its culture.

Culture then is much more than dinner, dress and dance, and other tangibles that are observable symbols of culture, which do change. It also includes the less tangible manifestations such as communication style, values, attitudes, family relationships and other complex interconnected elements that fulfill specific functions in the lives of members of the society (Nieto 1996, James 1995).

2. Ethnicity and Race

Ghosh (1996) points out that although ethnicity and race are closely related in people's minds, they are socially constructed (p.10). Smith (1991) defines an ethnic group as a group of people who share a common ancestry and history, who may or may not have identifiable cultural or physical characteristics, but identify themselves as members of that group through the process of interacting with each other. They often but not always speak a common language, and are identified as a distinct group by their common values, tangible expressions of culture and histories (p.181-182). Race on the other hand is constructed in terms of physical criteria. According to Jones (1991), "Race becomes the basis for expectation regarding social roles, performance levels, values, norms and morals of the group and non-group members alike (p.9). And as James (1995, p.6) stated "Skin color is often the basis upon which status allocation and group membership take place."

3. Dominant and Minority Groups

James (1995) argues that the location of various groups within the social stratification system will determine the extent to which they are able to influence the overall culture of society (p.2). "Social stratification" refers to the hierarchical system in which various groups in a society's population are ranked on the basis of power, wealth and prestige. Given the stratification and the consequent hierarchical positioning of the various groups in society, the culture that emerges will mostly reflect that of the group with the most economic and political power." Thus, the values, traditions, norms and expectations of the ethnic group with the most power will emerge as dominant in society's culture.

The terms “dominant group” and “minority group” represent the relationship of groups to the power structure. Members of the dominant group control the economic, political and social participation of other members of society. They usually occupy elite or privileged positions, and are characterized by having power and access to economic and political resources (James 1995, p.6).

Minority groups on the other hand, are defined by the dominant group on the basis of what it perceives as physical, economic, subcultural and/or behavioral characteristics. Members of these groups are not only often treated differently, but also negatively and are often forced through the institutions developed by the dominant group to conform to the existing culture of society (Driedger, 1989; Smith, 1991).

The stratification between genders also falls within this dominant/minority group dichotomy. Where sex is seen by feminist theorists as biological, gender is considered to be a social construct. Gender stratification then is a social ranking in which females are given a subordinate status in society (Ghosh, 1996, p.11). The pay equity issue in many corporations and institutions, where women are paid less for the same job descriptions as men bear witness to this kind of stratification. Another example is the well documented, mostly unconscious differential treatment of female and low socio-economic group students in schools by teachers. In some other countries, gender stratification is even more gruesome in that some female babies are either killed, left to die or treated negatively due to society's lack of value for females (for example, India, Sri Lanka and China). A very recent report by the United Nations asserted that "if there is one group of people who are bearing the brunt of this world's brutality, it is women." The report counts 60 million women worldwide whose lives have been lost to violence and deadly discrimination" (CTV News, July 22, 1997).

In Canada, although much progress has been made on issues concerning gender equity over the years, and many females now occupy positions that have hitherto been the purview of males, the same cannot be said of people from ethnic minority groups. Females who are also members of the so-called "visible minority" groups suffer doubly, and very few, if any are seen in positions that seem reserved only for males or members of the dominant group. In fact it is a misnomer to identify these minorities as visible, because in reality, they are marginalized and not visible. It is not only until recently that visible minorities are seen as members of parliament, or even on our television sets as news reporters.

4. My Location within Culture

I have often wondered about my own location within culture, particularly the cultures in which I have participated over the years. Born and raised in Nigeria, proficient in several Nigerian languages as well as English, I traveled to and lived in Scotland for several years, and came away with a new perspective of Britain and its many cultures, acquired a taste for some Scottish dishes, had children who are Scottish by birth, but more importantly questioned the authority and authenticity of what I had been taught about British history while my country of birth was under the colonial government. Later on, I came to Canada, and again unknowingly began a new process of cultural change and transformation. Then I moved again for several more years to Alaska, living and working among Alaska Natives, a colonized people with a very distinct frontier culture and family relationships which remind me of my own country of birth, but also with many traditions which seem totally new. Culturally, I seem to have come full circle. I seem able to glide through and function in each of these cultures, understanding behavior based on some of our shared values, and knowing what to expect within each one. As a result of these experiences, change, and constant adjustment to new people and places in my life, I regard myself as a hybrid of many cultures, inescapably negotiating, formulating and reformulating my perspectives.

Homi Bhabha, in an interview with Jonathan Rutherford (1990, p.211) explains the notion of hybridity as the "third space" which enables other positions to emerge, rather than being able to trace two original moments from which a third emerges. In being a hybrid of many cultures then, identification becomes a "process of identifying with and through another object, an object of otherness, at which point the agency of identification - the subject - is itself always ambivalent, because of the intervention of that otherness" (p.211). This cultural hybridity then "bears the traces of those feelings and practices which inform it ... [putting] together the traces of certain other meanings or discourses... [and] giving rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (p.211).

In her "travelling tales," Minh-ha (1994) narrates the dilemma of hybridization...."having constantly to negotiate between home and abroad, native culture and adopted culture, ... between a here, a there, and an elsewhere" (p.9). While I am subject to the hazards of displacement, interaction and translation, there is the opportunity to widen the horizon of my imagination and to shift frontiers of reality (Minh-ha 1994, p.11). Having lived in North America for almost a decade, I no longer feel like a stranger, but I still have to negotiate constantly between the culture that I was raised in and my adopted cultures. And as quoted in Minh-ha, I am warned that "When you no longer feel like a stranger, then there will be no problem in becoming a stranger again." I was a stranger here once, but have come to love my new home. The problem is that I become a stranger again when I go back to visit my old home, and the process of negotiating, formulating and reformulating continues, wandering back and forth across cultures and languages.

5. The Problem with Difference

In her book Redefining Multicultural Education (1996), Ghosh explicates what she calls "the politics of difference" and how difference has come to be seen as deficient, inferior, bad or weak. She states that "Schools socialize students to respond to human differences with dislike and apprehension by either ignoring, destroying, or incorporating differences (p.6). She goes on to state that the focus of comparing opposites, such as we/they, white/black, male/female, middle class/working class, good/bad, superior/inferior, strong/weak, etc, "may consciously or unconsciously mask the more complex, underlying power hierarchies in gender, race, and class relations - for example, white is superior to black, male is more powerful than female" (p.6). Thus the problem with difference is not that it is deficient or inferior, but that it is understood in that way and that it is constructed on the basis of the lack of power and the subordinate identity of people and groups, and serves to separate certain groups from others. In amplifying her point, Ghosh gives examples of how society constructs difference, and how the concepts of race, ethnicity, gender and class have changed over time and are therefore, not fixed. She gave the following example:

> Although in contemporary Canada racism is seen as discrimination directed mainly at nonwhite people, this was not always the case....Eastern Europeans were subjected to racism in Canada at the turn of this century because they were seen as being of a different race and ethnicity. Viewing whites as one racial group is a recent phenomenon and Banks (1995) points out that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries some White races were considered superior to others. [Thus] the classifications of race, ethnicity, gender, and class have no relevance either as a basis for assignment of rights or as grounds for prejudice and discrimination. They indicate changing power and social relations (for example, women did not always have the right to vote) (p.7).

Nieto (1996) also revisits the deficit theories of the 1960s, during which theories of genetic inferiority and "cultural deprivation" were popularized. Although these theories were challenged as a strategy of "blaming the victim", and there have since been three decades of newer and more comprehensive explanations for school failure, these theories did leave their mark, and many minority students and adults alike still suffer academically or as members of society respectively from the legacy of these theories. Nieto points out that the theories are not only classist and racist, but also simply inadequate in explaining the failure of so many students. While students' race, ethnicity, social class and language often have a direct impact on their success or failure in school, she emphasizes that "there is not simply a causal effect between these characteristics and school failure. Instead, it is the school's *perception* of students' language, culture, and class as inadequate and *negative* and the subsequent devalued status of these characteristics in the academic environment, that help to explain school failure" (p.230).

Crichlow, quoted in Alladin (1996), criticizes school authorities which often see students' cultural departures from White middle-class norms and values as aberrations, cultural deprivations, and deficits, rather than as "signifying a complex dynamic of social difference" (p.44).

This lingering perception of difference as deficient has great implications for our schools, educators, administrative policies and institutions of higher learning. These implications have direct impact on how we respond to the knowledge of the cultural other, how our students are affected by the school's curriculum, how we adjust our teaching styles, and how we educate our teachers-to-be in institutions of higher learning.

B. Multiculturalism and the Canadian Scene: Historical Overview

1. Canada's Multicultural Policy

Many Canadian historians (Jaenen, 1972; Mallea and Young, 1984; Palmer, 1972, 1984; Titley, 1982, 1990), to name a few, have written extensively on the Anglo-Canadian and French Canadian responses to the influx of immigrants from various parts of the world at different times in the history of Canada. This history, which will not be repeated here, provides a deep insight into the Canadian Government's response to cultural diversity and the consequent emergence and adoption of the policy of "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework".

At Confederation, Canada's cultural diversity appears to have been a major determinant of the form of pluralism that was adopted. Robert W. McPhee, of the Ministry of Culture and Recreation in 1867 said:

> In our Confederation there will be Catholics and Protestants, English and French, Irish and Scots, and each by his efforts and his success will add to the prosperity, power and the glory of Confederation. We are of different races not for strife, but to work together for our own Common welfare.

The above pronouncement indicates that even at the time of confederation, people who are now regarded as members of one race, regarded themselves as different races, and thus needed to work together for the country's common good. There was diversity in religion and ethnicity at the time, and so an education system which would cater to these differences was adopted.

The importance of education in this regard seemed to have been fully recognized when the framers of the British North America Act moved education "out of the national political system into the subsystems of the provinces where the differences could flourish" (quoted in Mallea 1984, p.1). The declared intent of these arrangements was to ensure that "all Canadians could retain their historic cultural identities while at the same time sharing economically, militarily and in international affairs in the benefits of a larger nation" (p.1).

However the efforts of ethnic minority groups to translate this political promise into educational reality were thwarted at various times and in different contexts, as evidenced by efforts of the Francophones in Manitoba and Ontario and other French-speaking minorities to provide education for their children in the French language (Titley, 1990). Indeed until fairly recently the public school in Canada went out of its way to eradicate differences in language and culture. As Jaenen (1972), and Palmer (1972, 1982) pointed out, rather than an appreciation of differences, assimilation has been the policy, and instead of diversity, conformity has been the goal. In the universities too, there has been a well documented and widespread neglect of Canadian issues and problems, including those relating to cultural diversity (Ibid.)

Since educational systems and institutions are shaped by the societies that establish them, and educational goals reflect societal goals, disagreements over major societal issues are very often reflected in educational institutions. Thus in a society that is culturally and linguistically diverse, the battle centers around what form society should take, especially where a society views formal educational institutions as the major institution for the transmission of society's core values and beliefs. In Canada, as with many other culturally diverse countries, the controversy rages on and they involve issues of culture, language and relationships among ethnic groups. If we go into a deeper layer of meaning, these issues revolve around political and economic power, privilege, control, how these are exercised and by whom. It also involves how these issues are responded to by various members of society.

It is important here to outline more definitively the Canadian concept of multiculturalism, since the term has come to be used in many other countries. When Canada's multicultural policy was announced by Prime Minister Trudeau in 1971, it was announced as "Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework" and was offered as a concession to Canada's "other" ethnic groups. The recommendation of the 1963 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism which proposed that Canada introduce policies and programs to secure the status of the French language in Canada was criticized as relegating all ethnic groups who were other than British or French to the status of second-class citizens. The place of the so-called other ethnic groups in a bicultural society became a vexing question for federal politicians, who had originally hoped that steps to ensure French-Canadian rights would go a long way towards improving inter-ethnic relations in Canada. The partial resolution of this dilemma then was the assertion in October 1971 by Prime Minister Trudeau that Canada is a multicultural country and that steps would be taken by the federal government to give public recognition to ethnic diversity through the introduction of a policy of multiculturalism. He said "...there cannot be one cultural policy for Canadians of British and French origin, another for the original peoples, and yet a third for all others" (Office of the Prime Minister: 1971).

The corollary of this position is clear. If the many cultures in Canada are seen as a heritage to treasure, then the attempt to ensure their continuance and development should help in the breakdown of discriminatory attitudes. Thus, Canada's policy of multiculturalism was indeed an ironic twist, the "unplanned offspring of the Commission" (Mazurek and Kach, 1990, p.136) that was supposed to be looking into equal status for the French and the English.

Since educational institutions have always been called upon to respond to the policies of nations, what was to be the role of education in all of this? After all from Confederation until after World War II, schools were the medium by which the policy of assimilation was enforced. In like manner, within Québec or what was then known as "Lower Canada", schools were the instruments used to ensure that people conform to French culture and language.

With the announcement of the policy of multiculturalism, educational institutions were also called upon to ensure the implementation of the policy. However, the major difficulty with this was that educational institutions were and are in the jurisdiction of the provincial governments, not of the federal government. This meant the federal government had to depend on the cooperation of the provinces to implement those recommendations that fall under provincial jurisprudence. Accordingly, Prime Minister Trudeau acknowledged that:

> Some of the recommendations that concern matters under provincial jurisdiction call for coordinated federal and provincial action. As a first step, I have written to the first ministers of the provinces informing them of the response of the federal government and seeking their co-operation.
>
> (Office of the Prime Minister, 1971).

When this new policy was being implemented initially, the focus seemed to be on ethnic languages and cultures. At the university level, institutions were encouraged to "broaden their practices in giving standing or credits for studies in modern languages other than French and English both for admission and for degrees" and to "expand their studies in the fields of the humanities and the social sciences relating to particular areas other than those related to the English and French languages." Similarly, "where there is sufficient demand" in public elementary schools it is recommended that "the teaching of languages other than English and French, and cultural subjects related to them, be incorporated as options" and "that more advanced instruction and a wider range of options in languages other than English and French, and in cultural subjects related to them, be provided in public high schools" (The Cultural Contribution of Other Ethnic Groups (1969), p.228-230).

The multicultural policy had a great appeal to the "other" ethnic groups and was seen by many Canadian minorities as a landmark in Canada's history, because it was regarded as constituting a complete retreat from the assimilationist policies and programs of the past. It was now possible for ethnic groups other than English or French to promote their cultures in a way that they had hitherto not been able (Palmer, 1984). However, it also generated heavy criticisms from Canadians.

2. Negative Reactions to the Multicultural Policy

Mallea (1984, p.10) suggests that negative reaction to the policy has coalesced around six basic criticisms. The first made mainly by Francophones in Québec, claims that the historical and sociological realities of Canada were distorted by the policy because Canada does possess two main cultures and languages. They believe that biculturalism should be the cultural policy for a dualistic state, and protest that culture and language are indivisible. They feel that it is therefore contradictory to have a policy of multiculturalism alongside a policy of two official languages. The policy of multiculturalism also served to erode the already shaky confidence that French Canadians have in the Federal

Governments' ability to protect their language and culture as constitutionally guaranteed by the British North America Act at Confederation.

This criticism neither takes into consideration the presence of the people in this continent before the arrival of Europeans, nor the presence of other peoples who have helped to build Canada in a variety of ways. The collapse of the Meech Lake Accord of 1987, and of the Charlottetown Accord in 1992, as well as the Québec Referendum which almost separated Québec from the rest of Canada in 1995, are reminiscent of Levesque's concern of 1977, when he stated that:

> Multiculturalism, really, is folklore. It is a "red herring." The notion was devised to obscure "the Québec business," to give an impression that we are all ethnics and do not have to worry about special status for Québec (p.178).

The issue of special status for Québec continues to play itself out in Canadian politics. During the campaign for the 1997 Federal election, the Québec question loomed largely on the minds of politicians as they argued about the issue of a "distinct society" clause for Québec in the Constitution. There also appears to be a backlash to the Sovereignty movement at this very time in the rest of Canada, particularly from the West, where some people feel that Québec should be allowed to separate from Canada if she so wishes. On the other hand, there are very many who are working hard to keep the country together by extending the hand of fellowship and friendship to Québec, as seen in the help rendered by Western Canadians during the 1996 floods, and the solidarity rally held in Ottawa by Canadians from all over the country to keep Canada together.

The second criticism of the multicultural policy is that made by First Nations peoples, who while rejecting the "founding nations" interpretation of Canadian society also found little comfort in a policy that hardly seemed to recognize their existence and made no mention of their rights as people who inhabited this land before anyone else. Several recent events also bring this point home to Canadians, as First Nations peoples have continued to protest their marginalization by either the Federal government, the Provincial governments or the Canadian people. Cases such as the delay of a critical vote to pass the Meech Lake Accord by Manitoba MLA Elijah Harper in 1990, the Oka crisis of 1990, and the recent public protests of The Assembly of First Nations Chief, Ovide Mercredi, all lend credence to the continued struggle of First Nations peoples to have some recognition in Canadian society.

A third criticism suggests that the policy of multiculturalism erroneously reinforces the belief that Canada's non-official language groups are homogeneous. Critics point out that while these groups share some important characteristics in common, they have differing views of themselves and their place in the Canadian society. For example, while some of the groups seem to have lost interest in their heritage languages and cultures, others work vigorously to maintain and enhance them within a Canadian context.

The fourth criticism centers around the argument that the multicultural policy represents a conflicting and contradictory response to poorly defined issues. These contradictions relate to issues of how to maintain unity in diversity, the rights of the individual vis-à-vis that of the collective. This criticism centers around the argument that the public school should provide a basis for unity and national consciousness. They see the various practices as having been divisive rather than integrative, each minority group acting as an interest group for the advancement of its own members. In an attempt to address the question of unity in the midst of so much diversity, it is my view that ethnic diversity is not incompatible with national unity. Unity need not mean uniformity. Indeed the recognition of the cultural contributions of non Anglo-Saxon groups, even though small, would, I believe, heighten these groups' feeling that they belong to Canada and thus strengthen Canadian unity.

The fifth is based on the view that ethnic and social stratification are closely related in Canada and that the policy stresses group maintenance and therefore helps preserve the values which are seen to be incompatible with the socio-economic mobility of minority group members. One measure of the validity of this fifth criticism could be the extent to which the most assimilated nonwhite individual members of minority groups have been accepted by the dominant group.

The sixth criticism is that the present multicultural policy emphasizes style over substance and thus enables the government to praise the values of individualism and pluralism simultaneously. It must be pointed out however that it is increasingly more difficult to justify and maintain the discrepancies between a democratic ideology and ethnic reality, as ethnic communities assert themselves posing a strong challenge to assimilation. This is evidenced by the passage of the Canada Act (1982) in which the Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that it shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians. It also includes clauses dealing with rights of First Nations peoples and minority language educational rights. What forms these take in publicly funded systems of schooling is not only a crucial but largely contentious and unresolved issue in educational theory and practice, as evidenced by the renewed protests and legal challenges regarding these areas of rights. Very recently, the Francophones in Alberta celebrated the new French school that will open in August. Until now, some schools could only accommodate French immersion students where a French immersion program is offered.

Another criticism comes from the Neo-Marxist school of thought which sees the policy of multiculturalism as a smoke screen diverting attention and energies from more fundamental issues of social justice, and issues which are rooted in social class conflict. They see multicultural education, as a tool to foster equality of educational opportunity, doomed to fail because the structural causes of ethnic inequality are to be found outside the school system. This implies that equalization of educational opportunities and educational outcomes hardly matter, because the "rate of return" on education is determined not by the educational system but by the occupational system. Thus educational achievement by members of minority cultural groups does not automatically translate into economic success (Wilkinson, 1981), which is true from the experiences of many people of ethnic minority groups known to me.

C. Summary

From the foregoing policy announcement and criticisms, it is evident that the attempt to pacify the dominant groups through bilingualism, and the "other ethnic groups" through multiculturalism, led to further discontent among Canadians. While the dominant groups felt that the policy eroded some of the power and privilege that was built into the British North America Act and the existing structure, the First Nations peoples felt it was another slap in the face, and for some minorities the policy came a little too late as they were no longer interested in their heritage languages or cultures.

As a minority within Canadian society, the policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework is reminiscent of the compensatory education policies of the United States in the 1970s for the so-called "culturally deprived". For many years, millions of dollars were spent on what was then called "War on Poverty", without taking a critical look at the preexisting social and economic structures that led, and continue to lead to inequities within society; the structures that continue to perpetuate poverty and powerlessness among racial and ethnic minorities. While the policy of multiculturalism seemed laudable to some of the so called "other ethnic groups", I see the policy itself as inherently unequal, still relegating minorities to the status of second class citizens, where people can only practice their cultures within the parameters of the two dominant languages. This raises the question of the interwoven nature of language and culture which was of concern also to the French Canadians.

Furthermore, while the English and French (in some schools in Alberta) languages are compulsory in schools, and have official status, other languages can only enjoy an optional status in schools. Moreover, the power to decide what languages will be offered even as options, and how they will be structured within any particular school still resides with members of the dominant groups, except where the school is completely a heritage language school, with people who speak the language at the reins of power.

D. Approaches to Multicultural Education

Looking at the volume of literature on this subject, it is evident that there has been a mixed reception to the policy and the concept of multiculturalism within Canada, (as is also the case in other parts of the world), ranging from confusion about what it really means to the dilemmas associated with the ambiguities, contradictions and paradoxes of the term when applied to education. These ambiguities include issues relating to target population, long-term goals and assumptions about cultural differences.

Multicultural education has been a reform movement aimed at changing the content and processes within schools. According to Sleeter & Grant (1987), multicultural education was originally linked only to concerns about racism in schooling, but has "expanded to address sexism, classism, and handicappism" (p.421). As with many other such movements, it began with a few people articulating concerns and recommendations, and then grew as these first voices were joined by many others who shared similar concerns.

The literature on multicultural education demonstrates that there are many different kinds of programs being offered under the term. In an attempt to reduce the confusion surrounding the concept, Sleeter & Grant (1987) reviewed the literature in multicultural education in the United States, and distinguished among five approaches, all of which are called "multicultural education". The authors developed a taxonomy by which to define the term, examine how it is used, and criticize various approaches for their shortcomings and oversights. I chose to include Sleeter and Grant's review of literature, although it is based solely on the body of literature found in the United States, because I was unable to find a Canadian based review as comprehensive as theirs in my literature search. I now discuss these five approaches found in the literature by Sleeter and Grant (1987), and where appropriate, efforts will be made to give examples of occurrences within Canada.

1. Teaching the Culturally Different

Advocates of this approach conceptualize multicultural education as something one does mainly with students of color. The goals are to help "minority students ... develop competence in the public culture of the dominant group", and at the same time help them develop "a positive group identity", which builds on their home cultures. According to Sleeter & Grant "its main purposes are to challenge the cultural deficiency orientation, to establish the importance of maintaining one's own cultural identity, and to describe aspects of culture [that] a teacher can build on" (p.243).

The reviewers suggest that there is more emphasis on cultural and language differences among groups, than on unequal social relationships. Authors who advocate this approach emphasize "building bridges between cultures to facilitate individual achievement and social mobility, rather than combating unequal distribution of goods and power among racial groups". (p.423). Most authors also discuss race and ethnicity without mentioning other forms of human diversity.

The reviewers found that all but a few authors tend to lump several distinct cultural groups together, and that the articles provide little specific information about how to teach children of color. While Sleeter & Grant share the authors' commitment to improving education for children of color, they argue that this must be done in ways that build on, rather than replace, the language, values, and experiences children bring with them. They see the approach as being limited because it "puts the burden of eliminating racism on people of color and their teachers rather than on the general population and especially on Whites" (p.425). They also feel that this approach addresses problems of low-wage jobs, racist hiring practices and unequal distribution of higher-wage employment opportunities, primarily by trying to equip people of color more successfully with the knowledge and skills to compete with Whites. "It does not imply that Whites should be taught anything more than they are now about racism, classism, or other cultural groups" (p.426).

2. Human Relations

The Human Relations approach conceptualizes multicultural education as a way to help students of different backgrounds communicate, get along better with each other, and feel good about themselves. Advocates see its purpose as the promotion of good human relations among students of different races by fostering conversation, and an opportunity for a variety of viewpoints. They emphasize improving communication between people of different cultural backgrounds. The publications reviewed by Sleeter & Grant all dwell more on how to apply this approach rather than on providing a theoretical foundation for it. They observe that much of the literature that uses a Human Relations approach seems to have been written by educators involved directly with schools and especially with desegregation. Consequently, the materials offer teachers practical ideas in clear language for improving their students' understanding of culturally different peers.

The reviewers also observe that this approach has not linked practical application theoretically and conceptually with social psychology, and theory on intergroup conflict and prejudice formation, although such connections are evident in other human relations literature. Nor is there conceptual linkage with research on cross-cultural differences as exists in the anthropological literature. It also lacks a development of long-term goals. For example, if conflict among racial groups in a school has been reduced, are there additional social goals to be addressed? This approach also does not address social stratification, and seems to suggest that people should get along, communicate, and appreciate each other within the existing stratified social system. Sleeter and Grant submit that issues such as poverty, institutional discrimination, and powerlessness are either little or nonexistent in the Human Relations Literature.

Before the cutbacks to the Multiculturalism Commission in Alberta, many of the publications funded by the Alberta government encouraged this approach to multicultural education. Publications like, "One Heart, Many Colours" (1990); "Multicultural Playground Manual" (1983); "Promoting Tolerance, Understanding and Respect for Diversity: A Monograph for Educators" (1985); and other publications like McLeod's "Multicultural Early Childhood Education (1984), tended to emphasize building students' self-esteem, stressing similarities rather than differences in students, and encouraging students to "walk in someone else's shoes". All of these were aimed at helping students to feel better about themselves and others who may be different. I also believed in this approach initially, thinking that if I could raise people's awareness to the pain of negative differential treatment, this might help people in building bridges across cultural differences. While the spirit behind this approach is laudable, from my experience, it seems to be more effective when people have come to understand the effects of oppression and discrimination.

3. Single Group Studies

Single Group Studies are "lessons or units that focus on the experiences and cultures of a specific group, such as an ethnic group". (Sleeter and Grant 1987, p.428). In this body of literature, Single Group Studies means ethnic studies. Most of the authors who advocate this approach pay least attention to goals, probably because it is assumed that the goals are understood and require little elaboration. However, those who stated goals suggested different ones. Sleeter & Grant quoted King (1980) who suggests that, ethnic education should "develop an acceptance, appreciation and empathy for the rich cultural and linguistic diversity in America", and Banks, who writes that it should "help students develop the ability to make reflective decisions so that they can resolve personal problems, and through social action, influence public policy and develop a sense of political efficacy" (p.428).

Of all the advocates of this approach Sleeter and Grant observed that only one discusses social stratification and social class. Otherwise, curriculum and instruction receive more attention than any other topic. Like the Human Relations approach, the reviewers suggest that Single Group Studies focuses on prescription and application much more than on goals or theory. They argue that the lack of attention to goals and social stratification presents a serious problem. Scholars in other disciplines who write about specific groups, do so to sensitize students to a group's victimization as well as to its accomplishments, and to mobilize student participation in current attempts to improve social conditions for the group. In their review, Sleeter and Grant found that although Banks articulates these goals, authors of other books and articles emphasize teaching about the contributions and experiences of a group without necessarily raising awareness of racial oppression or mobilizing for social action.

They express concerns "that teachers, especially many White teachers, may not view social change as a goal of Single Group Studies. For example, a teacher might teach about traditional American Indian cultural practices but not even mention their oppression today. I see this in the schools where I have served as a parent volunteer on many occasions. Although there is value in teaching about cultures, the failure to address issues of current social stratification and social action ignores a major component of what many scholars deem essential to Single Group Studies. Sleeter & Grant feel that advocates of this approach need to discuss its goals more clearly, and draw on discussion by other scholars who have written about individual ethnic groups. They also feel that advocates of Single Group Studies tend to ignore multiple forms of human diversity. They gave an example where some may deal with racism in the curriculum, by developing units or courses of study about ethnic groups, but where such units can still be sexist and classist.

In Alberta, programs designed to prepare specific teachers to meet the needs of specific minority groups include the University of Alberta's intercultural education major, with emphasis on native education, the University of Calgary's Native Student's Program and the University of Lethbridge's Department of American Indian Studies.

4. Multicultural Education

Although advocates of the foregoing approaches also use the term "multicultural education", Sleeter and Grant chose to use this term for a fourth approach because they feel that the reviewed "authors do emphasize education that is truly multicultural and that focuses on common goals" (p.429). They observe considerable consensus in the goals stated by the advocates of this approach. They quoted Gollnick who summarized the five major goals of this approach, namely, to promote "strength and value cultural diversity...Human rights and respect for cultural diversity....Alternative life choices for people....Social Justice and equal opportunity for all people...and Equity distribution of power among members of all ethnic groups" (p.429). They also observe that although authors emphasize and elaborate on different goals, most accept all five.

Culture and language are treated in a complimentary manner, and seen to provide conceptual support and clarification for the first three goals mentioned above. Proponents of this approach advocate such strategies as cultural retention classes, instruction in the mother tongue, and quota systems for educators, so that the schools and school systems can reflect the ethnic and cultural structure of the communities they serve.

In Canada, for example, the National Indian Brotherhood in their policy paper, Indian control of Indian Education (1972), clearly articulated the belief that the school must take an active role in cultural maintenance, stating:

> Unless a child learns about the forces which shaped him, the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never know himself or his potential as a human being. The child who learns about his heritage will be proud of it. The lessons he learns in school, his whole school experience should reinforce and contribute to the image he has of himself as an Indian (p.9).

Emphasizing the importance of control of the decision-making process, the policy paper maintained that "Indian parents must have control of education and the setting of goals ...[and] therefore reclaim our right to direct the education of our children" (p.3).

Although the establishment of separate schools and school systems has offered a powerful way of resisting what is seen as the forces of assimilation within the school system, there have been new developments in the province of Alberta to promote a degree of cultural retention within and outside the school system. For example, there was a significant amendment to the School Act in 1971 which allowed for instruction in languages other than French and English.

Some ethnic groups within the province have taken advantage of this provision, and rallied their local school boards to offer elementary level bilingual programs. For example, programs are being offered in Arabic, Chinese, Cree, German, Hebrew, Polish and Ukrainian. These programs offer 30-50 percent instruction in the heritage language in subjects other than English language, arts, science and mathematics. School administrators have a lot of latitude in the way that their school's bilingual program is organized. In some of the bilingual programs, the school day is organized such that half of the day is taught through the medium of a minority language, and the rest of the day is conducted in English. In others, students are taught all subjects through the medium of the

English Language and taught in the stipulated heritage language when the subject comes up in the school day's schedule.

Also, an Alberta government publication, "Alberta's Cultural Heritage: Building on tradition", in 1984, supports the "teaching and learning of languages by assisting ethno-cultural organizations operating Heritage Language Schools outside of the public and separate school systems." (p.5). Over thirty heritage languages are taught in this setting for two to three hours per week during the school year. Most of these programs do not offer any school credit to the child.

Sleeter and Grant suggest that in this approach to multicultural education, social stratification receives less attention than culture. "The main issues addressed are institutional racism in society and schools, unequal power relationships among racial groups, and economic stratification and social class. These discussions develop the ideas presented in Gollnick's fourth and fifth goals." (p.431). While several advocates offer well developed models or approaches to help teachers implement multicultural education in the classroom, some caution that attention to groups identified by other than ethnic status will shortchange the concern for the study of experiences and issues of racial minorities.

Textbooks which discuss culture aim at helping students understand what culture is and why cultural assimilation is undesirable. "Authors draw upon anthropological studies to provide a sound counterargument to the notion of cultural deprivation" (p.432). Sleeter and Grant express concern that social stratification, by contrast, is not discussed with the same degree of detail. They wrote:

> ...Inadequate coverage of social stratification is significant because social stratification as well as racial oppression, has provided much of the impetus for recognizing the need for multicultural education. The desire not to have to assimilate culturally has been only part of the concern; the desire to have power and economic resources equal to Whites has also been a concern. Emphasizing culture at the expense of social stratification may suggest to those Whites who prefer not to confront racism, that maintaining and valuing cultural differences is the main goal of multicultural education.
> (p.432-433).

The reviewers also feel that there needs to be more discussion about whether multicultural education should deal with other status groups in addition to race and ethnicity. These discussions must recognize the inter-relationships among status groups. For example, Blacks and women cannot be viewed as distinct and separate groups because some Blacks are women and vice versa. They also criticize the lack of discussion on school or system-wide practices that need change. Standardized intelligence and achievement tests, ability groupings and the declining numbers of minority teachers are seen to be realities that place minority students at a disadvantage. They feel that failure to discuss such issues may suggest that they are separate from multicultural education.

5. Education That Is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist.

Advocates of this approach conceptualize multicultural education as a way to prepare young people to take social action against social structural inequality. In this approach, Sleeter and Grant observe that authors extend the goals of the Multicultural Education approach. They quoted Suzuki as advocating more emphasis on helping students "gain a better understanding of the causes of oppression and inequality and ways in which these social problems might be eliminated" (p.435). In the reviewed publications, authors argue that teachers can accomplish this by "changing their teaching practices in ways that will make their classrooms more democratic" (p.435). They feel that students should learn to use power for collective betterment, rather than merely learning obedience.

Advocates of this approach criticize the emphasis on culture, saying that culture is often assumed to be the major factor of oppression, when in fact, class is a more central factor. Sleeter and Grant quoted Suzuki who warns that "the social realities of racism, sexism, and inequality are often overlooked or conveniently forgotten" when culture is overemphasized (p.435).

While some of the authors provide lessons to help children learn to analyze and take action against social inequality. Sleeter and Grant feel that it is strange that few works advocating this approach elaborate on social structural inequality, since its central goal is preparing future citizens to make social structural changes that will uphold equality. Gender and social class receive more consistent attention from literature in this approach than from other approaches.

The reviewers submit that this approach is the least developed. It is viewed as an outgrowth of the Multicultural Education approach, which includes among its goals the objectives of reducing racism and building a more just society. However there appears to be less consensus about what to call this approach. Gordon calls it "emancipatory education", Giroux calls it "transformative education", and Shor calls it "critical teaching" (p.436). This approach also offers little theory about changing social stratification. Sleeter and Grant argue that agreement on a term will help advance the approach by fostering dialogue. They also suggest that much more needs to be developed for this approach. Particularly lacking is material on achieving the goals in schools, "without which the approach can be passed off as a good, but impractical or unrealistic, idea" (p.436).

E. Limitations of Multicultural Education: In Search of a Re-definition

In the foregoing sections of this chapter, I have given a historical overview and analysis of the Canadian policy of multiculturalism, and the various ways in which this is being reflected in school practices. I have also shown from the literature that the term "multicultural education" has come to hold different meanings for different programs (although there are overlaps), as evidenced in the foregoing classifications suggested by Sleeter and Grant (1987). This conceptual labyrinth gives rise to one of the major criticisms of multicultural education. Banks (1989) offered an articulate description of the goals of multicultural education:

> – to transform the school so that male and female students, exceptional students, as well as students from diverse cultural, social, racial, and ethnic groups will experience an equal opportunity to learn in school.
>
> – to help all students develop more positive attitudes toward different cultural, racial, ethnic and religious groups.
>
> – to empower students from victimized groups by teaching them decision-making and social action skills.
>
> – to help students develop cross-cultural dependency and view themselves from the perspective of different groups. (p.19-20).

However, he acknowledged the inadequacy of this term when he stated that multicultural education has become a "useful umbrella" but one that "is not an adequate concept to guide research and policy decisions on problems related to racial and ethnic minorities" (1988).

Sleeter and Grant (1987) agree, for, in their foregoing classifications, it is evident that much of the existing literature addresses only limited aspects of multicultural education. Consequently, the authors synthesized and analyzed this body of literature in order to bring conceptual clarity to the field by examining what it means to different people, as well as providing a critical examination of its limitations. Sapir (quoted in Aoki, 1996) provides insight into the reason for the limitation of the definitions of multicultural education. He noted that "culture is not, as a matter of sober fact, a 'given' at all. It is so only by a polite convention of speech" (p.407). This point not only expresses the difficulty of capturing people's experiences with words, it also portrays that culture cannot be defined through binaries, such as we/they, black/white and so on, mentioned earlier. Thus Ghosh (1996) calls for a multicultural education that is:

> Relevant at the structural and individual levels in education. It has an integrated approach that incorporated human concerns at the local, national, and global levels into one framework. It includes cognitive (knowledge), affective (feelings), and ethical (moral) spheres relevant to education. (p. 34).

Neito (1996) also attempted to provide what she considers as a more comprehensive definition of multicultural education which is antiracist, pervasive, and which considers social justice.

F. Conclusion

While the policy of multiculturalism, and the attempt to implement it within the realm of education is almost thirty years old on the Canadian scene, it continues to founder in a sea of uncertainty. The policy itself bears no assurance of promoting unity and harmony. It could eventually be integrative or divisive, it depends on what Canadians do with it. It may produce new forms of racism, by emphasizing group identification and belief in differences, and it could promote further ethnic stratification and inequities among groups. On the other hand, it may be a means whereby minorities can claim equal rights to what has been the prerogative of a privileged group.

While the vision of the multiculturalism policy is noble and inspiring, it is not only elusive but riddled with contradictions. In seeking an answer to the problems posed by it, Mazurek and Kach (1990, p.159) point out that "the decisions made will strike to the very heart of our ethical concept of ourselves as a nation and will bear directly on the social objectives we will choose to pursue." The question remains as to whether the policy has resolved the fundamental issues of equity among racial and ethnic groups, between males and females, narrowed the gap between the rich and the poor, between the able and disabled. As to the response of educators and educational institutions to the policy, it is pertinent to ask ourselves the question: to what extent have we developed greater sensitivity to the diversity in our classrooms?

Chapter III

My Research Journey

> [Any individual's]...research career is unmistakably a reflection of the person that he or she has been. Of all the possibilities, one raises only certain questions, pursues only certain approaches, and reads the results in only certain ways. What is not selected, followed, and seen, as well as what happens to be chosen, abundantly reveals the boundaries and configurations of the individual's world. (Brimfield, Roderick & Yamamoto, 1983, p.15).

A. Introduction

In the last chapter, I reviewed literature on culture and education, particularly of multiculturalism in Canada. I also reviewed the various approaches to multicultural education in schools. This study is concerned with explaining how some teachers educate in diverse cultural contexts as well as how I came to a deeper level of self-understanding in my teaching. My interest is to seek knowledge that explicates our meanings and understandings as educators of children from different cultural backgrounds as we engage in actual practice in the complex world of teaching. Because the search for meaning and interpretation is always problematic and cannot be finally closed off, I chose to employ an action research orientation for this study.

I begin this chapter by describing and reviewing the literature on action research and why I believe it is the most appropriate methodological orientation for a study such as this. I continue by stating my original plan and how the research evolved. I then introduce the participants in this study, followed by the methods employed to gather data on what it means to educate in diverse cultural contexts. I conclude the chapter by listing some of the assumptions that I brought into the study. I deal with these assumptions and the understanding that emerged for me because of these assumptions in detail in chapter five. My examination of the assumptions that I brought into this study represent another level of action research.

B. An Action Research Methodological Orientation

Kurt Lewin (1946) is credited to have developed and coined the term action research. Since Lewin, many educators have employed and further developed the notion of action research. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) define action research as "...a form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out" (p.5).

Carson, Connors, Ripley and Smits (1990, p.2) also see action research as "an attempt to understand our educational practices in a more complete way in order that we may act in ways that may bring about both improvement and understanding". Those involved in action research engage in a systematically repeated cycle of four activities: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Because action research is an on-going strategy, the cycle is repeated to form a spiral: reformulated plan, revised action, more observations and further reflection (see Figure 3.). There is an initial round of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting after which a revised plan is developed and implemented based on the information gained from the first round. The revised plan can yield new questions and deeper insights into the area that is being explored. Tripp (1990, p.160) points out a problem of the common representation of the action research cycle, stating that it does not adequately allow for the inevitably more complex nature of the cycle as it actually proceeds in practice. He said, "one of the complications concealed by a simple account of the action research cycle is the fact that the different moments contain aspects of all the other moments within themselves". Tripp gives the example of writing to underscore his point:

> ...How does one act without continually collecting data on one's performance (monitoring), reflecting upon the feedback one receives (analysis), and thinking ahead about one's next action (re-planning)? Clearly the same is true of the other phases: One cannot plan without referring to data, thinking about it, and acting

> upon the plan, so the planning activity is itself a form of reflective action. In this respect, action research involves a process of reflection on reflection, but it can never be exhaustive, can never "arrive" at an end point of full understanding. A residue of valuing always remains, even if, for instance, it is only in the form of reflection employed (p.160).

From the foregoing paragraphs, it is evident that writers and researchers earlier on concerned themselves with providing not only what they felt was an adequate definition of action research, but also expanded upon Lewin's formulation of how to carry out an action research project. Most recently however, action research has been reconceptualized as a living practice. In their recently published book Action Research as a Living Practice, Sumara and Carson (1997, p. x-xi), wrote:

> While early questions around action research were those of definition (What is it?) and methodology (How do we do it?), later questions became more concerned with ethics (Who is responsible? How is power shared? What are the effects?). As it became more aligned with an increased critical consciousness in the field of education, action research became understood as something more than a prescriptive practice where particular ends could be achieved, action research began to be understood as a way to uncover, interrupt, and interpret the inequities within society and, most importantly, to facilitate the ongoing process of social change.

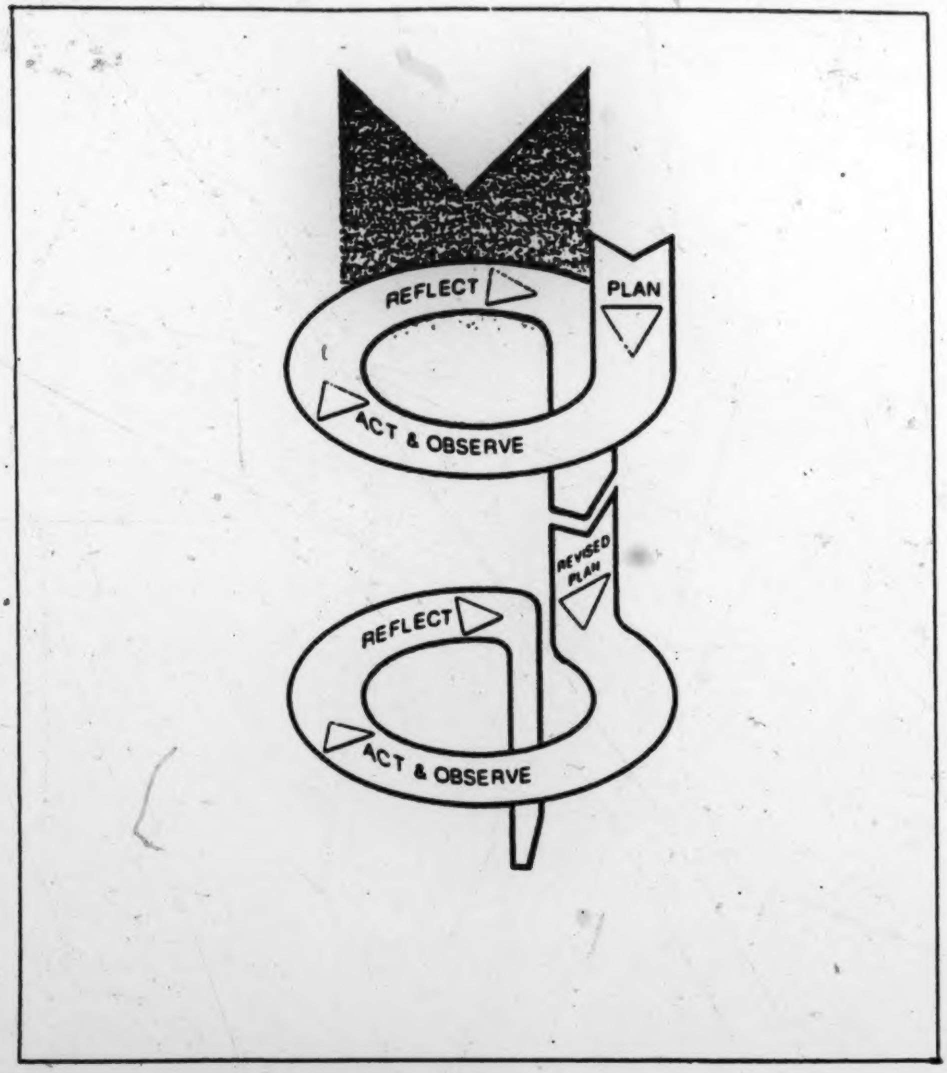

REFLECT
PLAN
ACT & OBSERVE
REVISED PLAN
REFLECT
ACT & OBSERVE

Figure 3: The Action Research Spiral
(Source: Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. (1988)
Action Research Planner)

Thus in reconceptualizing action research as a living practice, research is not understood as "something that is related to, yet separate from, the lives of educational practitioners, students, and communities, [it] is understood as something that is inextricably tied to the complex relations that form various layers of communities." (p. vi-vii). This formulation then effectively reinterprets the so-called theory and practice separation by suggesting that "what is thought, what is represented, what is acted upon, are all intertwined aspects of lived experience and, as such, cannot be discussed or interpreted separately". (p.vii).

As such, the knowledge that is produced through action research is never merely knowledge about some thing, "it is always knowledge about one's self, and one's relations to particular communities. In this sense, action research is deeply hermeneutic in that it acknowledges the importance of self and collective interpretation, and therefore can never be exhaustive, never be static and never "arrive".

The action research orientation seems apt for this study, which deals with understanding children who are perceived as different in gender, culture, race, socio-economic status or ability. Children in these categories have been affected by tacit inequities within our school systems as suggested by either the high rate of failure among racial and cultural minorities or the few numbers of female students going into professions deemed exclusively for males. In this study, an action research orientation enables us to come to a deeper level of self-understanding by uncovering who we are as educators, and how this is completely caught up in what we know and do. By coming to a deeper self understanding, perhaps we may become more sensitive in relating to our students and more pedagogically accountable in educating them.

C. Original Plan

In the next two sections I discuss my original research plan and the initial difficulties that I encountered in starting the research. As I later reflected on this original plan, I understood the assumptions that I had brought into the study. Those assumptions are presented at the end of this chapter.

My original plan was to work with three classroom teachers who had identified their interest in working more effectively with children from diverse cultural backgrounds. I expected to work with "typical" teachers from the Anglo-Saxon and/or French backgrounds because these cultures are regarded as the dominant ones within the Canadian context and into which immigrant children have traditionally been assimilated. In reflecting on this, I see that I was guilty of stereotyping teachers in this way, and therefore altered my plan.

At the time, I envisioned that the teachers would be involved in this research project in several ways. I saw them as collaborators, in that they would also have joint ownership of the research. They would write their reflections about their classroom practices in a journal, before, during and after the research project, and that this would serve as a record of their journey in terms of growth and understanding. Through discussion, the teachers would identify a question within their practice pertinent to our concern for children from minority cultural backgrounds that they would like to focus on in the form of a project. My plan was to visit each classroom for half a day, once a week to observe the teachers' interactions with their students and suggest ways of working more effectively with them. Moreover, I planned to carry out another level of action research on my own research by reflecting upon my interactions with the participants.

My plan for both levels of research was to utilize the process of action research as outlined in Kemmis' and McTaggart's The Action Research Planner (1988) as a guide. The procedure follows a cycle consisting of moments of reflection, planning, acting, observing, reflecting, replanning, and so on, which takes place in a spiral fashion as described earlier.

This research was proposed with the knowledge that there were teachers in the school system, some of whom I had met in earlier workshops, who had a multitude of concerns and questions about multicultural issues, such as how to resolve value conflicts, where and how to access resources, how to integrate multicultural programming into their curriculum.

Many teachers within both Alberta's urban and rural school settings teach children from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Questions about how to meet the needs of children from cultures that are not familiar seemed to be a valid and legitimate topic for research. With this knowledge, I was fairly certain that I would be able to find teachers who would be willing to participate in the study as originally planned.

D. Initial Difficulties

There were initial problems in finding participants for the study. I believe the reasons for such difficulty were threefold. The first has to do with the very sensitive nature of the topic. After placing notices in school bulletins and having no response, I decided to call some school principals whose names had been provided to me by a School Board consultant. In describing my study to one principal, he asked: "So, are you looking for discrimination?" I proceeded to re-explain my topic and wondered if he would pass on the information to his teachers. I stated that I wanted to hear what teachers themselves had to say about their comprehension of cultural differences and how that understanding is manifested in their day to day teaching. In response, this administrator felt that coming to his school would be unfruitful because none of his teachers would be interested in such a topic. This was typical of the responses that I received at the early stages of my search for participants for this research study.

A second reason was timing. Some principals and teachers did not think that the timing was suitable for them. By this time, it was already February and teachers seemed reluctant to commit to the time it would involve to participate in the way that I had outlined.

The third reason was the nature of involvement. I had intended the research to be collaborative and that the participants have as much ownership in the research as I did. This entails time commitment for meetings and writing, and coping with my presence in the classroom. This raises questions about the nature of collaboration which I reflect on in chapter V. Although I was willing to negotiate the terms of the research, I felt that there was resistance to my wanting to be in the classroom as a participant observer. Two teachers said that they would be willing to participate as long as they could tell me what they do in their classrooms, but not if I wanted to come to their classrooms to observe.

Reflecting on this original design, there are some inherent assumptions which I came to understand much later, and which I will discuss at the end of this chapter. Since I was not meeting with any success in my search for participants, I felt that I needed to change my strategy. This led to conducting the research study as a graduate level seminar. The seminar was aimed primarily at classroom teachers, or teachers who have had experience teaching culturally diverse children. As a graduate seminar titled: "Seminar in Teaching Culturally Diverse Children: A Collaborative Exploration", the participants could obtain university credit for which a university professor was to be responsible.

Unable to find enough participants for a summer course, the university professor and I, decided that the seminar run during the Fall of 1992 term, with the blessing of the chairperson of the department. I re-publicized the seminar by placing notices in the bulletins for both school boards in the city, and also by contacting school administrators that I had not contacted before. By this time, several people were already suggesting that I search for another topic, as this "topic is not the type that people knock on doors to participate in." In August of 1992, I visited various schools and spoke with groups of teachers during the beginning of the school year staff meetings. An initial meeting date had already been set, and interested teachers were invited to participate in that meeting. Talking with groups of teachers provided an opportunity for them to ask questions that were important to them and seek clarification on the nature of the study. Some teachers indicated interest in participating in the seminar but did not want university credit. I felt that the crucial factor was to obtain a group of interested participants, so the seminar was structured to accommodate different needs by giving options. Those who wanted to obtain credit were required to fulfill some additional university requirements.

E. The Participants

The eight participants and I all had teaching experiences which ranged from one year to more than twenty. There were four men and four women who ranged in age from twenty-four to fifty two years. Four of the teachers were currently teaching in elementary classrooms, two were pursuing a doctoral program at the university, one was a substitute teacher and one was a university professor. The participants were also from a variety of racial, cultural and religious backgrounds. Each teacher had had experience teaching children from a variety of cultural backgrounds in as far away places as Africa and Alaska, northern parts of Alberta among indigenous peoples, and within the city of Edmonton in areas with large immigrant populations.

Some major factors that seemed to have brought all of the participants together were their interest in and concern for children from a variety of cultural backgrounds. They also had dilemmas, challenges, and questions about diversity and its implications for their teaching practices. For all the participants, there seemed to have been a need to connect with other teachers to share personal success stories, challenges and dilemmas, and resolve for themselves some of the issues that they are dealing with or have had to deal with in the past.

Of the eight seminar participants, three took the course for credit. Each of the participants was aware right from the beginning that this was a research project and that the information gathered in the seminar would be used for my doctoral dissertation. They also had the option to withdraw from the research project at any time they wished (see Appendix B). The participants were guaranteed anonymity, thus they chose pseudonyms that they would like to be called for reporting purposes. A brief introduction to the participants, Sam, Robyn, Nemo, Sherie-Mae, Paul, Bert, Clare, Liz and myself, will follow.

Sam: Sam came to Canada from a Middle Eastern country in the mid 1970s to study and then return to his home country. However the political situation in that country later caused him to re-evaluate his decision to return, and he has since become a Canadian citizen. He came to participate in this study to share some of his own personal experiences and stories of being different, and being in a different country, and how these experiences have shaped his teaching. At the time of the study, Sam was an elementary teacher in an Arabic bilingual public education program. In this school, 84% of the students were in the bilingual program.

Robyn: Born to Caucasian parents, Robyn taught for a year on a reserve among indigenous peoples in northern Alberta. Robyn came to participate in the study because of some of her experiences teaching on the reserve and with questions about how to develop an effective curriculum for First Nations students. At the time of the study, Robyn was a substitute teacher with a public school district.

Nemo: Nemo is a Canadian, born into a family whose descent is Middle-Eastern. His mother and father immigrated to Canada in early 1940 and 1950 respectively. They got married here and had all their children in Canada. He came to participate in the study because he identifies with some of the struggles that his students are experiencing coming from the same background. At the time of the study, Nemo taught an upper elementary grade in an Arabic bilingual public education program.

Sherie-Mae: Sherie-Mae was a second-year kindergarten teacher when she came to the study. She taught in a school with students from a variety of cultural backgrounds, including Japanese, Chinese, African and Arabic. There is an Arabic bilingual program in the school where Sherie-Mae taught with an average of six Arabic bilingual students per class. This is a smaller percentage, compared with the school in which Sam taught. The school's arrangement is also different in that Arabic students in this school are "pulled out" of regular classroom for instruction in Arabic. Although some of her students are from racially and culturally different backgrounds, Sherie-Mae feels that they are all from a middle-class background. Before coming to the province of Alberta, Sherie-Mae had also taught second graders in another province in a school with children that were mostly Caucasian. She is also interested in multicultural issues and sits on the multicultural board of a city neighborhood with a large immigrant population.

Paul: Paul was raised in a "largely White community in Texas." He came to the University to do a doctoral degree. He had had a lot of experience teaching different grades of children, from a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds from preschool to junior high school, and was involved in teaching some undergraduate classes at the University at the time of the study. He came to the study because of his experiences growing up and teaching in the United States. The experiences sparked his interest in issues regarding people's response to cultural differences. He also came to hear other teachers' personal stories as well as share his.

Bert: Bert is an African who, like Paul, was also at the University to pursue a doctoral degree. He had had five years experience teaching children from diverse ethnic backgrounds, though all African, in his home country. The issue of cultural diversity was therefore of interest to him. Not only did he have personal stories to share, he also made comparisons between responses to cultural differences here and in his home country, and sees a very large difference, and also wonders why.

Clare: Clare, born to Caucasian parents, was raised in an American city until age six when her family moved to Canada. The culture shock that she and her mother suffered for many years in their new home had a great deal of impact on her and how she views difference. She came to the study to share hers, and hear other people's stories. She has "a desire to be supportive based on my own experiences as a child who needed to feel competent and accepted in two diverse worlds". Clare has had more than fifteen years experience teaching kindergarten. At the time of the study, she was teaching in a neighborhood with a large immigrant population.

Liz: Liz is a university professor who came to participate in the study not only out of interest, but also as one of the criteria for offering the seminar as a graduate course. Although she grew up in a small community where every family seemed and behaved alike, her experience of difference in a university class challenged her thinking. At the time of the study, Liz had been teaching at the university level for over twenty years.

Rachel: I had had thirteen years of teaching and research experience at the time of the study. I had taught at the elementary, high school, college and university levels in my home country before coming to engage in doctoral studies. At the beginning of this dissertation, I explained how this all began, and the space from which I construct my story. Although I have lived in countries where cultural differences exist, my experience of being different in this country was the spark for this study.

The discussions and interpretations during this study are the result of a process of interaction among the nine of us. Although participants showed a high level of commitment by attending group sessions, the degree of participation by individual members varied, as would be true of any group setting.

F. Methods

Several activities were engaged in to gather information for this study. There was a series of ten seminars during which we had group discussions; several of the participants and I wrote in reflective journals; there were writings by participants in which they responded to some questions or activity at my request, or wrote a review or critique of a journal article. The participants provided me with access to their journals and other written responses to the exercises or activities, as well as the written reviews to journal articles. I also had school visits with three of the teachers and conversational interviews with some of the participants to clarify some points.

1. Seminar in Teaching Culturally Diverse Children

The seminar was scheduled on a weekly basis. The group met one evening or morning each week (depending on teachers' schedules mostly), for ten weeks, for two to two half hours each session. We arrived at meeting times by consensus, accommodating the needs of members of the group who had varied responsibilities and time commitments. This was one unique situation where rules and regulations of university requirements would have stifled rather than freed us to participate in the best way we could. However, we did not have full attendance all of the time by all of the participants. There were sessions that some participants could simply not attend because of a conflict in their schedules. The seminar was held in a university classroom, a few tables moved together and surrounded by nine chairs. An urn half-filled with hot water was always ready when the class began. Participants took turns providing snack, some of which was ethnic because of the ethnic mix of the group.

I was glad to see the level of commitment that all the participants had, to come for the seminar on an early Saturday morning sometimes, or in the evening on a school day after a long and busy day at school or university, given that most did not register to obtain university credit for the seminar. We all gained a level of comfort with each other as the seminar progressed. As time wore on, we accepted the challenge of being able to discuss very difficult and sensitive issues openly.

The seminar gave the participants the opportunity to reflect on multicultural issues and dilemmas individually, and to collectively reflect on and discuss these in a small group setting. I had written and distributed some seminar objectives during the first session, but participants were invited to suggest additional goals that we were to work towards (see Appendix C).

At the initial stage of the seminar, the focus for our discussions was provided by participants who identified an issue or dilemma that they were facing. On some occasions, these were issues that had to be dealt with in a particular school or some other situation on that particular day. These issues or dilemmas usually had precedence over other events for that day. Journal articles which addressed some of the issues already identified also provided focus for our discussions on these occasions.

Most of the issues dealt with in the journal articles centered around racial, ethnic, gender, disability and poverty issues. Although the participants were unaware of the scheme for selecting the journal articles (listed in appendix D), their discussion revealed recurring themes of race, gender, and poverty.

2. Group Conversations

The weekly seminar periods provided me with the primary source of conversational data. I use "conversation" in a way similar to that described by Gadamer. In a conversation, there is genuine interest in all participants to hear each other's voice and a willingness to work together to develop understanding. Gadamer states the idea of conversation thus:

> A conversation is a process of two people understanding each other. Thus it is characteristic of every true conversation that each opens himself to the other person, truly accepts his point of view as worthy of consideration and gets inside the other to such an extent that he understands not a particular individual but what he says (1984, p.347).

In this definition, conversation has to do with coming to a shared meaning, or a common meaning of what is being talked about. To be involved in a conversation is not to out-argue the other, or to prove the rightness of one's own opinion, but to be guided by the "what", the object of the conversation (p.330). Participants in a conversation are driven by a shared topic of concern in which they have a common interest and which they wish to understand. This definition presents one of the main functions of conversation which is my rationale for its use. It is a means for exploring and "implicates a revealing of something held in common" (Carson 1986, p.78). Gadamer goes on to state that:

> What emerges in its truth is the logos, which is neither mine nor yours and hence so far transcends the subjective opinion of the partners to that dialogue that even the person leading the conversation is always ignorant. Dialectic as the art of conducting a conversation is also the art of seeing things in the unity of an aspect, i.e., it is the art of the formation of concepts as the working out of the common meaning (quoted in Carson 1986, p.78).

In his explication of Gadamer's definition, Carson states that "the research stance then is one of allowing the meaning to emerge through the language...To allow the language to perform this function, it is necessary that the openness of the question be preserved and not cut off too early by rapidly formed opinions and conclusions. Openness may be preserved by giving due consideration to what was reflected in the language of the conversation. The words spoken may then have a way of surprising both the researcher and the participant with unexpected insights" (p.78).

This point is reiterated by van Manen (1990, p.66-68) and Polkinghorne (1988) who also believe that it is important to allow the participants to continue their story until they indicate that they have completed what they wish to say. Polkinghorne states that: "This context is different from the typical survey interview context, in which the interview is controlled by the interviewer who asks specific questions and intervenes when the answers are "off-track" (p.164). If this open-ended approach is used, he says participants are more likely to relate anecdotes and stories. I found this to be the case in our conversations, especially after the first two sessions. By this time, we were beginning to build a relationship, and so it was becoming easier to tell rich personal stories and anecdotes in our group sessions.

This leads to a second main function of conversation as presented by van Manen (1990, p.66, 97-100). He states that conversation is a way to develop a conversational relationship with research participants about the meaning of their experiences. In this study, we were driven by the common interest about educating culturally different children, our own understanding and new awarenesses. Although the word "conversation" has come to mean to talk with others, it emerges from the Latin word "conversare", which means "to dwell, abide, pass one's life." Therefore, in conversation, we must pay attention to the way we abide, or dwell with others, which consequently determines the quality of relationship that is developed. In further describing the research conversation, van Manen states:

> A conversation is not just a personal relation between two or more people who are involved in the conversation. A conversation may start off as a chat, and in fact, this is usually the way that conversations come into being. But then, when gradually a certain topic of mutual interest emerges, the speakers become in a sense animated by the notion to which they are now both oriented, a true conversation comes into being. (p.98).

Adopting these approaches to conversation, our group and individual dialogue were structured only to the extent that I often focused on issues or topics by providing pertinent journal articles which served as a springboard for our conversations. After a few sessions, some participants also provided journal articles that focused on a particular issue under our general topic, for group discussion. Sometimes, the discussions began by drawing on a question that someone had regarding a particular issue or a request for clarification on a statement someone made in the previous class. Sometimes, I would start by asking participants to write about a pertinent situation that they had to deal with in the past, and to share such information. I also participated in these writing activities, which often led to rich personal stories and/or anecdotes from participants. These were usually collected at the end of the session to help me find participants' meanings.

We each took turns expressing our ideas, asking further questions and clarifying and elaborating on what had been expressed. The atmosphere was relaxed and informal, but sometimes punctuated by a long silence when someone shared a very difficult personal story. However, since true dialogue involves an openness to the question, I feel reluctant to suggest that we had genuine conversation on a consistent basis. Initially there seemed to have been a flitting over the surface that seemed to deny questioning of what lay below. This was characteristic of the first two sessions in which our conversations seemed to focus on providing answers to questions which arose out of some problems which some of the participants were facing in their schools, rather than a discussion of the issues from which these problems and questions arise.

Reflecting on these initial sessions now, I feel that given the nature of the topic, these "question-answer" sessions as I call them, probably served us well to an extent. I regard these initial sessions as a period in which we were all "testing the waters" as it were. Answers provided, and the posture of each participant to the questions posed during these two sessions seemed to have been the determining elements in our search to see whether or not we could trust each other enough to discuss our feelings about issues regarding prejudice, discrimination and cultural differences openly.

Another challenge was how to preserve the openness of the conversation as we got to know each other better, in relation to the pragmatic demands of doing doctoral research. When a conversation was sometimes not pertinent to, or focused on our topic, I often tried to re-focus us by asking a more pertinent question. Yet, this was sometimes very difficult to do because of the nature of conversation. In order to maintain openness and not interrupt a person's train of thought, it was very necessary to wait and allow the conversation to run its course. At first, I felt anxious when such a situation would occur. But as I felt more comfortable with the level of commitment that the participants showed in regular attendance and participation, I was more accepting of them. In reflecting about this, I later came to understand that what I had considered "off-track" conversations were actually catalysts for various participants, as someone was reminded of a story or an anecdote that is relevant to our topic. These conversations also helped in building group cohesion.

All group discussions were audio-taped, transcribed and read in order to identify topics discussed each week. Following my analysis of each conversation. I attempted to focus on the particular insights the dialogue had given into the issue of educating children in diverse cultural contexts. This led to further questions which were either explored or reflected on the following session. These reflections often led to the exploration of a related topic or question.

3. Journal Writing

Craig (1983) defines journal writing as "the private, self-expressive, and reflective writing one can do as a way of understanding self" (p.373). Hence, when employed as one's personal exploration of one's lived experience, journal writing can provide a rich source of research data or information (Carswell, 1988; Edwards & Craig, 1990; Janesick, 1983). In recording and reflecting on one's daily experience, one reveals inner thoughts, reactions, and feelings about the content of one's life that enable one to make sense of everyday life experiences.

A research journal, whether written by the one conducting the research or by the participants is a record of that person's professional choices as well as his/her reflection, thoughts and feelings during the moment of the journal entry. At the same time, writing in journals is a continuous and active process in which a writer explores the "ongoingness" of experience, thinking about the past, but also opening him/herself up to new possibilities of change through professional and personal learning and development. In describing the energy generated by the process of journal writing, Craig states:

> One reconstructs moments of the past, not in order to wallow in the emotions associated with that (because some of those emotions can be very painful), but in order to let the energy of understanding that you've coped with those emotions take you forward to look with deepened insight at the future (p.374-375).

In utilizing journals in a graduate curriculum course, Carswell (1988) concludes that "it is through expressive language that a student may explore ideas, clarify impressions, and express tentative conclusions and opinions. Through this type of writing, the students impose order and structure on ideas and expose their thoughts for further clarification and refinement...make discoveries at the "point of utterance," insights become apparent and take shape as you write." Berthoff (1987), also refers to journals which she calls a "dialectical notebook" in which we have a dialogue with ourselves - "that dialectic is an audit of meaning - a continuing effort to review the meanings we are making in order to see further what they mean" (p.12).

While the literature on journal writing suggests the very many benefits of this process, Janesick (1981) cautions that journal writing is not an effective strategy for everyone in that it is a time consuming technique which requires creativity, discipline, patience and willingness to reflect on what is said and done in the classroom on a regular basis.

Several writers (Bertoff, 1987; Craig, 1983; Progoff, 1975), suggest three phases in the journal writing process. The first is the initial writing of observations, noted impressions, passages, jottings on reading, drawing of sketches, or other responses. The second phase involves re-reading of the journal entry. This allows a writer to see what the issues are and consequently, what questions need to be raised. The third phase is responding to what was written or sketched. As Bertoff, writes: "...The dialectical notebook can teach us [a] toleration of those necessary circularities. Everything about language, everything in composing, involves us in them: ...[making] notes on these notes, [responding] to these responses... thinking about thinking; arranging our techniques for arranging; interpreting our interpretations." In short, it involves making "meta-comment" (Bertoff 1987, p.12).

Journal writing during and after the research was for me a very effective tool for reflection on my experiences, before, during, and after the research study. It provided opportunities for self assessment and the assessment of our group sessions. It enabled me to raise questions, and to seek clarifications from other participants either within the group setting or individually.

Some of the participants had indicated right from the beginning that they were unable to commit to journalling on a regular basis due to time constraints. This situation continued into the research as only three of the participants (Clare, Nemo and Bert) wrote extensively in a journal. Thus I did not consistently receive as many journals as I had hoped for and in a sense this is a limitation because journal writing was one element I felt was important in coming to a deeper self-understanding and therefore growth, in research of this nature. I therefore had to resort to using a pocket-sized tape recorder during visits to individual participants to "catch" their thoughts and little snippets.

Although they were not transcribed, tape recording these conversations became a very important way that I gathered participants' thoughts and responses to issues, group activities and discussions. I replayed these tapes later that evening and wrote down points shared. When I meet with participants later, I stated the points gleaned from previous conversations, and use those as starting points for our next conversation. These one-on-one conversations, as well as the journals which were shared with me, enabled me to know the participants better. They also provided us with opportunities to share personal experiences, stories and feelings which we did not feel comfortable sharing in the company of other participants.

On some occasions, participants decided to share with the rest of the group some of what they had shared with me either in a journal or conversation. Clare found journal writing personally rewarding. It allowed her to share with me in writing what she did not feel able to share during group sessions. Not only did her journal enable her to reconstruct moments of the past which has come to shape her current philosophy and teaching practice, but also searched for deeper insight and self-understanding through writing.

I had a research journal in which I wrote and documented all of my experiences and responses during the months in which I was waiting to find participants for this study. I continued writing in this same journal during the research. During the research study, I wrote regularly both during group sessions and after group sessions. I made a note of nuances, inflections and hesitations. After the sessions, I transcribed, re-listened to the tape(s), read and re-read the transcripts. Later on, it became important for me to note gestures too, as these could not be caught on audio tape.

I also wrote my responses to the group discussions as captured on tape, and reflected on my own thought processes as certain issues were discussed during group sessions. I made note of my level of comfort or discomfort when certain issues were being discussed, and also wondered how comfortable others felt during the discussion of some very difficult topics. All of these enabled me to raise questions and issues which I took back to the group. I was sometimes invited out for lunch and in one instance for dinner by some of the participants. It seemed inappropriate to carry a notebook to a restaurant to write, but I often took a folded sheet of paper in my purse to write on. When this ran out on occasion, the restaurant napkin, or the back of an envelope became my notepad.

Much rich information has often come from such "stream of consciousness" conversations.

4. Participants' Writing

Although most of the participants did not write in journals, they did other writing, such as reviews of articles, critiques ~~of~~ articles, and other writing to clarify and elaborate on issues and statements that they were concerned with. Other writings included those in which participants were requested to describe a pertinent situation in their past or present teaching experience; their report of an interview conducted with parents of children from a different cultural background; and their reaction to a video, The "*Eye of the Storm*", that we watched in class.

5. School Visits

As the series of ten group sessions in the Fall term ended, three classroom teachers, Clare, Nemo and Sam agreed to invite me into their classrooms. I felt that observing the teachers in their teaching milieu would provide me with insight into some of the experiences they had shared. At the beginning of a new term in January 1993, I started to visit each teacher's classroom once every week during the first month. I later continued visiting schools once every three weeks until the end of the school year in June of 1993. Clare however invited me to visit her class more often. During these visits, I became a participant observer in Clare's kindergarten classroom, whereas I was a non-participant observer in Sam's and Nemo's elementary classrooms.

On one of my visits to Nemo's classroom, he encouraged me to enter into a dialogue with some of his female students. He felt that they were more likely to "talk", more than the boys would. After the conversation which lasted only a few minutes because of a change in period, Nemo told me about some of his students, and his feeling of pressure to be the best role model he could be for his students, especially since he shared the same ethnic background with them. He shared his frustration about the lack of parental involvement in the education of their children, and wondered what he could do to encourage them to have a voice in thejr children's education.

I did not have the same opportunity in Sam's classroom. He showed me some of the students' work on the bulletin board, as well as his plans for the next social studies unit. In Clare's classroom, I became a helper in setting up or monitoring the activities at various centers, in tying shoe laces for children who were unable to do so, or helping children finish up a project to present to their parents in time for a special occasion. Clare also invited me to have snack with the children during which important values of sharing and appreciation were encouraged, to sit in during storytelling and reading sessions, and sit in on her student and parent conferences. She later explained the rationale for her approach to the conferences, and gave me copies of forms which she had designed for use during these conferences, each of which lasted from thirty to forty-five minutes.

On occasion, I was able to scribble a quick note on a piece of paper to remind me of something that either Clare or one of the children said. I recorded my observations of, and responses to Clare's classroom in my journal when I returned home after my visit.

6. Conversational Interviews

As I went over transcripts after the group sessions, there were some issues that I felt needed clarification by individual participants. This led me to organize a conversational interview with individuals. The interviews were open ended, however I focused the conversations with the following questions:

1. What do you understand by diversity?
2. What experiences do you consider important in your becoming a teacher of students from diverse cultural backgrounds?
3. How do you respond to diversity within your classroom?

These individual conversational interviews were not formally scheduled, but were organized as I felt necessary during the research study and after the group sessions ended. These were also audio-taped, transcribed and analyzed. I had many informal conversations with each of the participants, either spontaneous or planned, in person or on the phone, and made notes in my research journal recording the nature of these conversations.

7. Other Materials

Clare provided me with video tapes of an interview which had focused on her classroom several years earlier. This interview was Clare's reflection on her classroom and her philosophy of teaching. She felt that this was relevant to our topic of teaching in diverse cultural contexts, and wanted to share them with me. Clare also gave me the response to a letter she had written to a school supplies company, and her written reflection on her own letter. She had also written and published about her growth and self-understanding from the interaction in our group in a referred journal, a copy of which I obtained.

Bert and Sam each wrote a paper in order to receive university credit for participating in this study. Although these were assessed and graded by the attendant university professor, copies were given to me for my study.

Sam also provided me with a letter in which he was invited by the Edmonton Social Planning Council to attend a community meeting in which the purpose was to "develop and implement initiatives to eliminate racism" in one of Edmonton's neighborhoods (letter dated May 26, 1993). He also provided a letter by the Canadian Arab Friendship Association inviting members of the Arabic-speaking community to a meeting to discuss the needs and future of the Arabic bilingual program (May, 1993).

Sherie-Mae, who was a member of an Edmonton community's multicultural board had suggested that I be invited to an impending panel discussion. In November 1992, I received an invitation from the multicultural coordinator of the community league to attend a panel discussion on "cultural values in relation to youth conflicts" (dated Nov. 3, 1992). I did attend this panel discussion located in a high school which has experienced some racial tensions among youth, and shared information got from the discussion with research participants.

All of the letters and panel discussions to which people were invited indicated the racial tensions among different groups in different parts of the city and therefore the importance of this topic. These letters became a source of discussion either during group sessions, or between myself and individual participants, since some of these community meetings occurred after the completion of the group sessions.

G. Analysis

In my analysis, I was guided by my understanding of the action research spiral which entailed planning, acting, observing and reflecting, and van Manen's two approaches to uncovering thematic statements. During the research study, I transcribed audio tapes of group sessions, read and reread the transcripts as well as my journal entries and analyzed them using van Manen's highlighting and line by line approaches (1984, p.60-61) in which I asked the question, "what statements or phrases seem particularly essential or revealing about the experience being described?" and highlighting these, and also reading each sentence to see what it reveals about the experience being described by the participants. This was done weekly during the research study, summarized and taken back to members of the group for further exploration and reflection, in keeping with an action research orientation. This usually led to a story or a further anecdote by one or more members of the group, or a clarification or a further question for exploration. The themes developed in chapter four recur as commonalities in the various descriptions and anecdotes gathered.

The time lapse between my research study, and the reinterpretation of the data three years later has been advantageous for me particularly. Due to time constraints, it is not possible to go back to my group participants for a reinterpretation of the data. For me, however, the time lapse has provided the opportunity to understand the experience of being in our research group as it was then constituted. It has brought to light an assumption that Liz, the university professor, and I did not realize we had at the time of the study. For me the issues have "percolated" as it were, and therefore have the advantage of a more sober reflection, giving rise to a more insightful and more enduring analysis than would have resulted if the writing been completed immediately after the study. More importantly, the advantage of the time lapse has been my own coming to a deeper level of self-understanding.

H. Reflections: Assumptions Brought into the Study

I came into this study with a fairly limited knowledge of action research. Unknown to me at the time, I had brought several assumptions into the study. Given a period of three years away from the study, and having reflected more critically on the study, I have recently come back to it with new eyes and now have a deeper understanding of the assumptions that I had brought into the study.

First, at the back of my mind was an agenda: to prescribe what teachers needed to do in classrooms, and how they should and should not relate to children from different cultural backgrounds. Unknown to me at the time, I was still in a "workshop mode", where participants would be provided with specific information on how to relate to students from different minority cultural groups. It did not occur to me at the time that I cannot legislate how teachers should relate to their students.

Second, although this was intended to be a collaborative study, I even assumed that I would have the answers to questions that teachers may or may not be asking. I now have a broader understanding of how collaborative action research relates to the combined efforts of a group in asking questions of mutual interest, and exploring possible solutions together.

Third, I had assumed that collaboration would happen, that it would be possible to bring together a group of teachers whose goal would be to address "this very pressing matter" (which seemed more pressing to me than to the teachers) in their classrooms, and who would not only want to collaborate with me but also with each other. In my thinking at the time, my role would be to provide an atmosphere in which trust could be built. I had not thought that trust was built from a state of mistrust, nor that it was not up to me, or possible for me, to make people trust each other.

As a result of all of these assumptions, I was unprepared for what was about to follow, the wait, the tensions, the lack of volunteers, the frustrations.

Through reflection, I understand now just how much I had taken my intended colleagues, the classroom teachers, for granted.

My reflections on these assumptions bring me into another level of understanding which provide the basis for my reflection on the theme of power relations in the study in chapter IV, and my reflection on collaboration in chapter V. In the next chapter, I discuss participants' understandings in the form of themes that emerge in the study.

Chapter IV

Participants' Understandings

> That is why it is impossible to produce scholars who in the true sense of the word are wise..., if they know nothing about themselves. Without self knowledge in depth, the master of any field will be a child in human wisdom and human culture.
> (Kubie, quoted in Brimfield, Roderick & Yamamoto 1983, p.5).

Introduction

In the last chapter, I described my research journey, providing a rationale for employing an action research orientation in my study. I also described how my journey evolved, the false starts, and the methods used in gathering data when the study finally started. I conducted the research by mainly using conversation as explicated by Gadamer, Carson, van Manen and Polkinghorne, as well as writing in a personal journal and in utilizing participants' writings. The transcribed conversations and journal writings provided the text which I interpreted and took back to the group weekly for further exploration, clarification or to raise further questions. I then utilized van Manen's approaches to uncover essential themes. In this chapter, I develop those themes. As my interpretations of these themes are read, it is important to keep in mind that, as with any interpretation, the possibility of multiple meanings of participants' understandings do exist. My own interpretations represent only one set of possible meanings. In his explanation of interpretation in human science study, Osborne (1990, p.87) suggests that the "... researcher's approach to reliability is based upon the observation that human perception is perspectival and contextual. Although there may be several interpretive perspectives on the same phenomenon, sameness (reliability) can arise out of the inconsistency, variability and relativity of human perception."

Since there are interpersonal differences in the way we experience phenomena, we do have multiple perspectives which "can lead to a unified description of a shared phenomenon." Osborne continues by saying that the "major risk of unreliability and invalidity resides in the interpretive process" and quotes Kvale (1983) who notes that the researcher can "read the data as the devil reads the [B]ible." Osborne reiterates then that "we must remember that there is no absolute interpretation of the data and that interpretations can produce contradictory as well as coherent meanings" (p.87). How then must a researcher address this issue of reliability? Osborne suggests that "the best a researcher can do is to argue a particular interpretation as persuasively as possible, supported by references to the data, and leave the final judgement to the reader" (p.87).

In this study, one way of checking interpretations was to identify themes from the weekly group conversations; these themes became objects of reflection in the following week's conversations. Further explorations and reflections built upon what had been said earlier and led to new themes which were again identified and presented. My intention in our conversations was to make sense of how we understood teaching in culturally diverse contexts. As van Manen (1990) points out, "The conversation has a hermeneutic thrust: it is oriented to sense-making and interpreting of the notion that drives or stimulates the conversation" (p.98).

The action research orientation employed for this study enabled participants to reflect on their practice. It also enabled me to engage in the self-reflective spiral of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, then replanning, further observation and reflection. This is premised on the idea that knowledge grows from reflecting upon experience and that knowledge itself is a continuous process of reconstruction by participants in practical situations (Freire, 1988). It was the reflective moments of the action research spiral that contributed to our coming to a deeper understanding of what it means to educate in culturally diverse contexts, and my own understanding of the notions of power and collaboration. The themes and interpretations, as well as my overall observations on what it means to educate children from diverse cultures are presented in this chapter.

I organize this chapter by stating the theme, followed by participants' stories and my interpretation in each section. I feel that it is important for me to present the dialogue in the participants' own voices so that the reader may better understand the nuances in their spoken words. Thus the themes are presented in the form of embedded conversations and as anecdotes which stand on their own to bring deeper meaning to the theme being discussed.

As I mentioned in chapter three, although there was a high level of commitment by participants in attending group sessions, the degree of participation varied. As a result, anecdotes from all of the participants may not be available in my development of each theme. I start with participants' construction of their identities as the cultural other. Who we are, or become, is directly influenced by who and where we have been, which in turn are influenced by our race, gender, socio-economic status, and other spaces that we occupy in society. In theme one, participants explored how this process occurred for them, and how it gave them insight into, and appreciation for others who might be different from themselves. In theme two, I examined power relations within the study. I reflected on participants' understandings of power and privilege of a teacher and White privilege. Participants provided insight into their personal practice in themes three to seven. In theme three participants provided insight into their understanding of bias, while theme four examined the need to create a climate of trust. In theme five, participants reflected on the need to negotiate conflicting paths, and theme six examined participants' efforts to respect and affirm cultural differences. Theme seven provided insight into how participants' self-understanding acted as a catalyst which liberated and spurred some participants into action.

Theme One: Constructing Identities as the Cultural Other.

One of the themes generated from the study is about how participants constructed their own identities as the cultural other. Identities are formed consciously and unconsciously through a history of experiences with parents, teachers and other significant people that we build a relationship with. The selected personal accounts reflect how participants have developed their senses of self, and how early experiences have influenced their lives. In most cases, the memories are those of pain and a sense of isolation. In one case, the memory is of an early experience of sharing and a meeting of the heart which transcended societal prejudices.

A. The Pain and Isolation of Feeling Different

Participants' stories

Clare: ... I always knew that I was different.

As indicated earlier, Clare is a Caucasian female, who has taught kindergarten for more than fifteen years. She teaches at a school in a neighborhood with a large immigrant population. In expressing her philosophy of teaching, Clare describes what she thought has influenced her identity as a person and as a teacher. She wrote:

> My philosophy of teaching, like my philosophy of life, has been strongly influenced by my own early childhood. I was born to a mother who was in the hospital recovering from my birth when my father left. My mother once said that if I'd been a boy that would have saved the marriage, so I assume that she had a rather weighty and unrealistic agenda for me at conception. [During] the war there was little housing and less spectrum of choice for an uneducated daughter of immigrant parents, so we returned to my grandparents' very large home, where I spent the first six years of my life living in an extended family with two and sometimes three of my mother's siblings, their spouses and children as well as her parents, my aunt, and my mother herself in residence.
>
> In many ways it was a superb beginning. I had as many as eleven in-house almost siblings. There were two grandparents and one great aunt who doted on me and nurtured freely, a beautiful yard, a tremendous family library and plenty of toys, my own and my cousins'. There was also a real appreciation from my grandfather for my intelligence and precociousness, which in retrospect is rather odd since none of his four daughters had any post-secondary education, other than one who took a vocational course. All of the family resources went to the only son, who obtained a Ph.D. and later taught at a university... I'm grateful for the

buffer of affection and attention my grandparents provided in my preschool years.

... I have happy memories of balloons at the Zoo, dinner in Chinatown, birthday parties, going to see Santa Claus, summers at a Lake, etc. I was always included with [my uncles'] children.

However, there was a barrier, a certain stigma, a strong element of not quite belonging. Although my grandfather treasured my intellect, all the adult women in the family gave me double messages about being bright. My cousins teased me about having no father. I remember saying "I have TWO Uncle-Daddies." No doubt they had valid reasons to resent me. Perhaps they were annoyed because I had more toys than any of them, I was a typical only child in that way. Probably I didn't share well. I remember my mother telling me that I told people at Sunday school that I didn't have a daddy "after we had agreed that you shouldn't say anything." I was three and a half. She must have felt a great deal of shame. I know that I carried heavy shame all through my childhood.

My physical appearance was part of the problem. ... I recall Thanksgiving celebrations when we cousins always enacted a play featuring the pilgrims, sheaves of corn, a plastic turkey, a cardboard Mayflower, etc. My role as the American Indian Pochahontas was mandated every year because I was the cousin with Black hair. In that way and many others, I looked like my father. Despite years and pleading, I could never be a pilgrim. Now, this seems very minor, but in my preschool years the situation was really painful. Perhaps these incidents help to explain why I, a very young child of Dutch and English descent, began to identify with people who were racially different. I certainly never felt "normal" myself. And while I put effort into passing for average from time to time to feel accepted, I always knew that I was different.

Very early on, I decided that all of the pressure to be like others was wrong, that people who pretended I was the same in an effort to be nice were doing me no favors, and that diversity is valuable. Although I felt deep shame and had serious self-esteem problems, there was a part of me strong enough to make a philosophical break with the right wing, racist teachings of my family. I remember arguing about "the Negroes" while sitting with my grandfather in the blue overstuffed chair which was our special place in his library. Since my mother remarried the month I turned six and we moved to Canada immediately, I could not have been more than five. What an odd little duck I must have been!

In retrospect, while I'm still appalled by the extent of my grandfather's racism ... I'm very grateful that he showed me enough love

> and respect that I felt I could safely argue with him, the "patriarch" of our family, and challenge him on a religious issue, given my wounded self-esteem in the wake of abuse and my lack of status as a preschool female.... This is an astounding page in my personal history.
>
> Strangely enough, while I recognized and loathed racism at a very early age, I remained oblivious to the biases of our religious and family culture which were most pertinent to my own early life. I never recognized, not to mention fought against, the extreme sexism which seriously blighted the lives of all the females in my family and also limited the options of the men. I was also in denial of the extent to which being a bright, assertive child with a good brain and a love of communication that produced a need to ask, challenge, and argue to clarify concepts and values, would lead me to transgress deeply imbedded concepts of ageism in our religious culture.
>
> I knew, even as a very young child, that I was different. I realized that I would have to be extremely careful to mask some critical parts of myself to pass for normal if I wished to avoid heavy penalties of stigma, rejection and abandonment. However, it was not until I was much older that I realized that no one is "average" and that this myth is extremely destructive to the uniqueness in each of us. I now believe that we live in a world where most people simply do not take joy in diversity. We have not yet begun to cherish each other's differences. To a person with a "low boredom threshold" this is an emotional tragedy, but also an enormous loss for the intellect.

Clare's identity as the cultural other was constructed through a history of experiences with her immediate and extended family members. She felt that her preschool experiences of difference have shaped her sensitivity to other people's differences. The happy times which she had with her grandfather, who loved, cherished and nurtured her provided her with an atmosphere where she could question, wonder aloud and challenge the prevalent thinking of the day, even that of her grandfather. Her extended family members were sometimes kind to her and sometimes treated her like one of their own. However, she not only suffered abuse, but also endured the deep shame of the stigma of her biological father's absence throughout her childhood.

Reflecting on Clare's story and the status accorded to females in her family, is reminiscent of the prize placed on male children by very many cultures including the Yoruba culture in which I was raised. Not only are male children more valued than female children, family resources were usually spent in sending the male children to school, under the guise that "a woman's place is in the kitchen"; that there is no use sending a female to school because she will be married someday and would leave home. Thus in many cultures, it was (and still is), a waste of family resources to "invest" in a female child by sending her to school. I remember many of my father's business friends criticizing him for sending his daughters to school. The thought that investing in a female child's education is wasteful permeated the culture in which Clare was also raised. Since it was the order of the day, the secondary place and role that were imposed upon females by society seemed normal to Clare, so she accepted them. She was fortunate though to have a grandfather who nurtured her free spirit and who allowed her to ask questions and to challenge him, although he probably would consider a similar behavior inappropriate in his own daughters. While this may be a contradiction in his actions toward females in his household, it is evident of the love that most grandparents seem to have for their grandchildren. Reflecting on Clare's story, I also think of the spaces that today's society has continued to impose on females and those who look different. There was a time in Canada's history when women were not even considered as persons! I further examine the status of women in today's Canadian society later on in this chapter.

Clare's cousins also treated her differently during her preschool years by mandating that she play the role of Pochahontas during family Thanksgiving re-enactment. The negative connotations that this character conjured at the time, is a memory that Clare struggles to prevent other children from experiencing. Her inability to participate fully in the family and choose the role she would like to play made Clare feel like a second-class citizen.

Due to her experiences of rejection, Clare had serious self esteem problems. Searcy (1988) suggests that a child must develop in each of the following ways in order to develop a positive self-esteem. "We must feel that (1) we are capable; (2) we are significant in that we matter to others; (3) we are powerful and have some say in what we do; and (4) we are unique and worthwhile in our own right" (p.454). Thus the value that young children (and adults) assign to themselves is a reflection of how they believe others value them. The feelings of being insignificant to some of her extended family members, and powerlessness in having a say in her role of Pochahontas are feelings that discourage building a positive self-esteem. Thus she continually had to "mask the critical part of [herself]" in order to be accepted by others. What Clare experienced in reality was the antithesis of Hollywood's portrayal of Pochahontas, her story being one of rejection, and consequently of pain and isolation. Thus Clare, in her reflections about her preschool years, has "listened with [her] heart, and she [does] understand", (a song in the Pochahontas movie), that being treated differently brings pain, isolation, and a low self-esteem. Therefore she feels that in her teaching, she must protect children from that emotional turmoil.

> **Liz:** I can remember feeling that every thing I stood for had been shot down and felt quite isolated.

Liz is a Caucasian female university professor who, at the time of the study, had taught for more than twenty years. She shared some of her memories of how she constructed part of her identity as the cultural other.

She wrote:

> I grew up in a community that was "extremely homogenous - all two parent, two or three kids, spoke English, most even went to the same Church, all attended the same country school ... I realized there were kids that went to our school and kids that went to the Catholic school, [but I] did not really experience much difference, they looked and acted pretty much as we did. It was in my first year of university, in an Educational Foundations class in which we had to do an activity about "our

> community", that it came as a real shock to me just how different other communities were. I can remember feeling that every thing I stood for had been shot down and felt quite isolated.

Liz constructed part of her identity within the confines of what she says was a homogenous community, in which there was little, if any difference at all. She had definite beliefs about her community, who she was, and what she stood for, until she came in contact with students from other communities in a course during her first year of university. Although her experience of difference was not due to racial violence, it seemed just as painful and intimidating to come from a community that was different from everyone else's. This again lends credence to the fact that although we are each different from others, as human beings, we view difference as a deficiency. Coming from a different community was probably not the cause of Liz's feeling of isolation and being shot down, but the feeling that hers lacked something which others probably had. She felt shot down in that her whole identity, all that she stood for, were wrapped up in all that she knew in her community. She felt shock as her norm about communities was challenged. This experience has enabled Liz to be open and sensitive to difference, in whatever form, in her teaching.

Sam: she said...'what is a person like you doing in this class?'

Originally from a Middle-Eastern country, Sam immigrated to Canada in the mid 1970s. He teaches in an Arabic bilingual education program. He shared some of his memories of events which have shaped his view of difference, and consequently, his view of teaching.

> It was during my graduate studies at a university, and in an "Old English" course, "Chaucer", that I met an older lady professor who was on the verge of retiring. My name, my complexion and above all my accent gave her an indication that I do not belong in her class, or her perception of who should be in her class. She was taking class attendance for the first time, and as soon as she got to my name, she stumbled, not knowing how to pronounce it ... She tried many times, with many variations, until I came to rescue her from her "dirty" chore and to preserve some dignity for myself.
>
> "Oh, what is a person like you doing in this course?" "Learning I suppose", was my answer with a breath of naiveté and indignation ... "Oh, I see", was her reaction. Few days passed before I was calm enough to talk to her about the episode, but she still had the same attitude. "Why aren't you in Business, or Engineering or something?" she asked me. I knew then that it was a waste of time and effort to talk to her ... I said to myself "forget it, she is not worth fighting or arguing with, but I will show her through my work that I belong in this course".
>
> Looking back at that incident now, I realize that it was shocking and even devastating because it is still vivid in my mind and still hurts, to even think back on it. I am positive now that my performance in that course was less than what I was capable of. During that same year, [I took] another course with a different professor with whom I had an opposite experience. The professor was jovial, encouraging and friendly. The result was a liking of the course, enjoying its contents and attaining an excellent result. There is no doubt in my mind that student performance

and achievement is closely related to teachers' attitudes and expectations of their students.

A teacher's negative treatment leaves Sam with a memory of pain and hurt. In the culture in which Sam was raised, the teacher is put on a pedestal. S/he is treated and looked upon with utter respect, so a teacher's mien is extremely important in interacting with students.

The initial respect that Sam had for this professor was lost very quickly because she had violated the high position on which Sam placed her. Sam felt that he needed to preserve his dignity by helping the professor to pronounce his name correctly. This reminds me of the fact that the name is very important in some cultures. Names carry meaning, and a mispronunciation could be very close to a derogatory rendition of the same. Although people do stumble when pronouncing a name that they are not familiar with, a sensitivity to the individual could be shown by asking very genuinely for help in pronouncing the name. The professor's question "what is a person like you doing in this course?" would deal a blow to most people if not everyone. Sam felt that this tactless question was the professor's way of informing him that he did not belong in that course because of his "name, complexion and accent". To Sam, the professor's question suggests that only certain people could be, and succeed, in the course. It is no wonder that Sam felt devastated, shocked and hurt. An attempt to resolve the issue was met with another blow to Sam's sense of self-worth, which ultimately prevented him from doing as well as he might have under normal circumstances.

Sam hones his point when he contrasted the Old English professor's attitude to difference with that of another professor whose behavior he considered warm and friendly. As a result of this warmth, Sam felt accepted by the professor, and was able to work hard and achieve highly in the course. Sam's story as the cultural other to the Old English professor demonstrates the power of a teacher in the life of a student, at any level of education. How a teacher uses that power, whether in a liberating or repressive way, can be etched in the memory bank of students for life. According to van Manen (1990), pedagogical tact enhances what is unique in that it is attentive to the uniqueness in individuals. Although he refers to the uniqueness of children specifically, pedagogical tact seems to be of importance in any teacher-student relationship. In the words of van Manen, "Every pedagogue should constantly ask him or herself these questions: In what respect does this child [or person] differ from me and from others? How can this child [or person] be different? How does this child [or person] want to be different? What can I do to assist the child [or person] in realizing his or her uniqueness?" (P.169-170). In Sam's experience, the Old English professor did not enhance his uniqueness as a cultural other in the class. Not only did she demonstrate the lack of tact by asking the question, but also in posing such a question before a whole class. It is no wonder that Sam felt shocked and devastated, and still feels hurt when he recalls the incident. To Sam, the professor's question and attempts at pronouncing his name were very humiliating, consequently, he felt the need to preserve some dignity for himself. Although he was determined to work hard and prove his competence to her, his anger about the way he felt treated and consequently his dislike for her course, ironically, seemed to have worked together with the professor's discriminatory attitude against him.

Nemo: Parents fear that their children will lose their "identities" in this society."

Born and raised in Canada, Nemo is from a family of Middle-Eastern descent. Like Sam, he also teaches in an Arabic bilingual education program. Nemo shares some memories of how he constructed his identity as the cultural other, and how he identifies with his young students who now experience what he had experienced at their age.

> I came from a family of Middle-Eastern descent. Both my parents migrated to Canada in the early 1940s and 1950s respectively. They got married and went on to have five children. My father has worked for the same company for the past 27 years...and my mother for a nursing home for six years. I was born here and have lived in the same part of the city of the past twenty-five years...

> I have taught division one students, and I now teach upper elementary students in an Arabic bilingual program. Coming from a family which believes in working hard and establishing a solid foundation for each member, we are a closely knit family who works as a team (most of the time). My teaching reflects this motto of working hard and establishing a good foundation. This foundation, I believe I am trying to instill in my students. Hard work will always pay off along with putting forth consistent efforts into whatever job you do. I have been teaching Arab children... and I feel that I am very sensitive to some of the obstacles that they presently face. My upbringing is basically similar to most of the students.
>
> Parents fear that their children will lose their "identity" in this society. They all want what's best for their children, but some face problems such as lack of education, lack of family support, etc. I see that most of the children's parents are more than willing to help. Most of the families use Arabic as their language at home. Some parents cannot aid their children with their school work. The children of the Arabic program are hard workers, and most are aware that they face the dilemma of living in two cultures (at home and outside the home). They face the same difficulties as I had to. Therefore I know that I try to teach these children to become sensitive to other cultures along with their own.
>
> I stress to them that we live in Canada and there is a good chance that they will remain here and pursue their careers and jobs. I also try to make them feel special to have a unique culture and [encourage them] to be proud of who they are. Parents are now realizing the importance of giving their children a proper education. But I feel that they need to realize that their children are also Canadians and that we will probably live the rest of our lives here.

The memories that have shaped Nemo's teaching come from his own early experiences, as someone who was born and raised in Canada into a family with a Middle-Eastern background. Since Nemo was born and raised here in Canada, he does not have any other point of reference to compare his experience with. Nemo's family's value of working hard is evident in his father's loyalty to the same company for twenty-seven years, as well as his mother's work in a nursing home. Not only have Nemo's parents adapted to very many changes, they also provide a solid foundation for each member of the family. This is evident in his sisters' being encouraged to pursue education, which seems to be in antithesis to his cultural background. In another reflection, he wrote:

> Boys, I would say, have it easier, less pressure is put on them. The belief here is that if a woman was to go off into another culture, then she would basically have to adopt her husband's religious beliefs. Quite a sexist philosophy!! Girls are at times sheltered and are not given the opportunity to work or pursue education. Many are usually married before they reach their twenties. This is not the case in my family. My sisters were and still are encouraged to pursue work and education.

Nemo feels the need to instill this value for hard work into his students with whom he shares a similar background. Like most young people who are born and raised in this country, Nemo believes that all Canadians have the same opportunities and chances to succeed once they have gained the ability, education and opportunity to apply consistent effort in whatever job one partakes.

Although he believes that hard work always pay off, the employment experiences of many visible minorities in Canada would seem to be contradictory to Nemo's belief, for many who have worked hard to obtain a good education are either unemployed or underemployed. James (1995) argues that "racial and ethnic minorities experience significant barriers to employment opportunities" (p.197). He gives an example of a survey of employers in Toronto which revealed that "most employers relied on informal employee and friendship networks to recruit and fill job positions. Moreover, a survey of 672 corporate recruiters, hiring managers and agency recruiters conducted by Canadian Recruiters Guild in 1989 showed that 87 percent of corporate and 100 percent of agency recruiters surveyed received direct discriminatory requests. Nearly three-quarters of corporate and 94 percent of agency recruiters complied with these requests" (p.197). In another study of employment opportunities for racial minorities in Toronto, Henry and Ginzberg (1985) concluded that:

> ... There is a very substantial racial discrimination affecting the ability of members of racial minorities to find employment even when they are well qualified and eager to find work ... Once an applicant is employed, discrimination can still affect opportunities for advancement, job retention, and level of earnings, to say nothing of the question of the quality of work and the relationship with co-workers (quoted in James 1995, p.198).

The Employment Equity policy seems to be an admission by the Canadian government that there are inequities in employment which needed to be addressed. Such a policy admits that other systemic factors, rather than mere individuals' efforts and ability determine peoples' achievement and upward economic mobility.

Nemo identifies with his students' dilemma in having to continually negotiate between their Middle-Eastern cultural heritage at home and the larger Canadian culture outside of the home. In spite of the length of stay of many Arab parents in this country, there is a real fear that their children will lose their identity. Nemo considers this to be a difficult dilemma for his students when I inquired about the obstacles that Arab children face. He reflected in writing:

> It seems to me that most Arab parents want to shelter their children from all western influences. Many feel that if their children assimilate into this culture then they will lose their heritage. When most teenagers are dating and bringing their "mates" over to meet their parents, it was and basically still is forbidden to bring a non-Arab over to meet my parents who would give their lives for their children to marry their own "kind". Many parents of my students are strong Moslems. They try and implement as much creed [as possible] into the children's daily lives. Parents fear this will be lost as children grow and interact in this society. Have I reached a resolution? Well, I'm not sure. With time and experience I am very content with this problem.

Nemo's parents, and other parents from his background, are very concerned about how to preserve their heritage, identity and religion, in a society where the majority does not seem to hold their values. Although Nemo encourages his students' parents to resolve the dilemma of wanting to preserve their heritage, and raising their children within Canadian society, he admits that he himself has not come to a resolution of this dilemma, even as an adult. Although Nemo's parents seem more open to encouraging their daughters to pursue education, they, and others are still very concerned that the preservation of their culture is dependent on their children marrying their own "kind." It would seem that females carry more of this burden than males, on whom "there is less pressure". Although he calls this a "sexist philosophy", he is not sure of how to resolve this dilemma himself, other than to accept the way things are.

Perhaps Nemo's present contentment comes from being a single Arab male! What would happen if he really desires to share his life with a non-Arab, non-Moslem lady? It would seem that he is also aware of a potential conflict between his cultural heritage and the pervasive culture of society should he decide to marry other than one of his own kind. As an Arab Moslem male, perhaps the pressure would not be as great. The pressure seems to be more on the female who would "basically have to adopt her husband's religious beliefs", if she marries outside of her culture and religion. In many cultures, when females marry, they are expected to not only take the husband's name, but also his "religion". Thus for an Arab Moslem male's family, marrying outside of the religion might mean having an additional person in the religion. The reverse would be true for a female, hence the great pressure and the felt need by parents to shelter their children from western influence.

One of the problems that Nemo alluded to is the ability of parents to help their children with their school work either due to language difficulties or a lack of education. This issue points to a major worry that many non-English speaking immigrants face. While many may be interested, and may understand the importance of education, the ability to help their children may be limited by a language barrier. Since many of our schools value tremendously the involvement of parents in the education of their children, many of these parents feel limited, because of language, to be so involved. Thus they face double pressure in being unable to help their children at home and in being unable to be involved at school. For many immigrant parents, there is also a feeling of shame that accompanies their inability to communicate with their children's teachers in a language that the teachers understand.

Nemo's sensitivity to his students who come from a similar cultural background thus has to do with his own experiences when growing up. His desire to belong and fit in with his peers as a young person, is seen in his dilemma especially at Christmas time. He wrote:

> Facing Xmas was a problem for me. As Moslems, we do not celebrate Xmas. Growing up with non-Moslems, I would lie to my friends and tell them what I got for Xmas just to feel like them. This is no longer a problem.

Nemo's desire to belong seems to resonate with Sam's, Liz's, and Clare's stories. We all want to experience the sense of worth and belonging that comes from being accepted by others. It affects the smallest and the greatest, the youngest and the oldest of us. The lack of a feeling of belonging devastates the young and perturbs the old. In a way, this need for belonging by all of us seems to be an equalizer. As a result of his experiences as an Arab Moslem when growing up, Nemo, who shares a similar background with his students, encourages them to be proud of their unique culture and of who they are.

B. Self-Determination in a Racist Environment

> **Paul:** ...and I said Santa Claus ain't Black, he's White. 'no', he said, this is Santa Claus really, and we had gotten to laugh so much ...

Paul is a Caucasian male, who was pursuing his doctoral degree. He has taught at various levels of education for many years in the United States. He also currently teaches some undergraduate courses at the university level.

> I grew up in the Southern United States segregated society, and my parents were, I would have never described them as being racist, because they simply didn't talk about anything. They were living, they both worked really hard, they just simply didn't talk about anything, politics, race, anything. So my sister and I kind of developed our own way of dealing with things, and my friends were from mostly red-neckish families, and they would use racial slurs, and it was kind of a mystery for me because I wasn't supported in that at home.
>
> For a long time I thought that my parents weren't racist, they've come to the South from the North, and that they've come from a different background. But then, after I was away to college and my dad eventually retired from working all the time, then all of a sudden I found out he's racist as hell you know. Now all of a sudden he's got an opinion about

> everything, "he's Black, she's a Black woman, everything on earth," whenever I have the chance to share with him.
>
> I try to figure out what happened to me when I was a kid that [might have] changed the way I was. And one thing that I remember was when I was about eight years old, we had moved to a new neighborhood, like a new subdivision where they were building all new houses. Our house was the last one out, and as kids, we used to play in and around construction, like in laying the sewer, and we'll play in the new sewer pipe, and all that kind of stuff. And we came out to the sewer once and there were these two Black men doing the brick work, and we were amazed because when they cracked that brick with the hammer it splits into these two pieces. ... So we sat and watched them for hours and they were amused by us too, I think, because we were White kids sitting there, watching them, they talked to us and all that.
>
> It was getting to be Christmas and we started talking about Santa Claus, and one of the Black guys said, (the other guy was a little bit older), you know this guy over here is Santa Claus, he's going to be leaving here pretty soon because he has to go and deliver toys to the kids and everything. And I said "Santa Claus ain't Black, he's White". "No", he said, "this is Santa Claus really." We had gotten to laugh so much, and we started going there and talking with them more often, and we started thinking "well, maybe, could be" and then sure enough he disappeared you know, before Christmas, and the other guy was still working and he said "yeah, he needs to go to the North Pole and keep the elves busy". It was crazy, but it changed us, I think.

One of the early memories which Paul recalls as shaping his identity as the cultural other has to do with his experience of sharing laughter with people who were different, and treated differently by society. Although they lived on the other side of the train tracks, two Black men, employed to break bricks for new houses in Paul's neighborhood, shared the gift of laughter and acquaintance which seemed to have had an impact on Paul. By talking and laughing together with the two Black men in Paul's story, Paul got to know the two men on a different level than his young friends from racist families, or his father. Although society segregated people physically when he was growing up, there was still a meeting of the heart, between Paul and the two men from the other side town, and an understanding of the true essence of each human being, that transcended the societal stigma of the men's skin color.

Before he came to know what his father thought about racially different people, Paul has shared the gift of laughter with people who were different, and has had the opportunity to explore, and formulate his own opinion, even as a child, about them. From Paul's story, it would seem that when children are left to explore and to make certain judgements on their own without interference from adults, they have a better understanding of what it means to relate with others.

From the above stories, it is evident that families, teachers, and friends had tremendous influence in participants' construction of their identities as the cultural other. These were shaped by memories of pain, isolation and devastation or of laughter and sharing. The stories provide insight into how participants were constructing their identities as the cultural other. Van Manen (1991) suggests that identities are always being constructed, and that the process never really ends. He wrote:

> The person I am is partly constituted by my life memories. Past experiences have been consolidated in me such that memories may unexpectedly appear in changing situations and circumstances.... The

> power of childhood and life memory attest to the fact that we are historical beings - we have life histories that give permanence and identity to the person we are.... Our lives are complex, ongoing and incomplete. Many of our life histories cannot be integrated into a harmonious whole. Our identities are layered and laterally segmented (p.22-23).

Thus while we have different layers and segments to our identities based on the different roles and spaces that we occupy, van Manen argues that "we also experience a permanent self-sameness at the core of our being. This self-sameness gives continuity to our character" (1991, p.23). The participants in this study occupy different roles and spaces, as males, females, minority group members, dominant group members, husbands, wives, children, teachers, and so on. The memories they have each chosen to share is one of themselves as the cultural other. As they encounter new situations, they were forced to form and reform these identities, and will continue to do so throughout life. However, as the stories portray, the influences from their past, from childhood, especially those of parents and teachers left their effects. Furthermore, while all participants live within a larger Canadian culture, some also have an ethnic culture which is an integral part of their identity. For some participants, this is a cause for tension as they endeavor to live within one set of cultural rules in the home and another set of rules outside the home.

Theme Two: The Relations of Power

A. Power Relations in the Study

As indicated in chapter three, one of the participants in this study is a university professor who came to participate both out of interest and to fulfill the department chairman's requirement of having a professor take responsibility for those who registered to participate in the seminar for credit.

In reflecting on the study, both Liz and I assumed that there was absolutely nothing wrong with her participation in the study. In my thinking, if anyone could connect well with the group, it would be Liz. She has a very warm and non-threatening personality, she seemed very open to the topic and issues that were being discussed, and also genuinely seemed to want to know more about how teachers were dealing with diversity in their classrooms. Who could fault that kind of attitude?

Although I was comfortable with Liz participating in the study, we both had not taken into consideration the power of her position as a university professor and the effect that this might have on the dynamics in the group. I had only thought about Liz as a person, not about the double power she held in the group. There was power in her position as university professor who would be grading some of the participants' papers at the end of the study, and power in her being a member of the dominant cultural group. With this group composition then, there was an imbalance of power which might have affected the ability of some participants to be open and to discuss deep heartfelt issues at first.

Gore (1993) explicates the regulatory aspects of pedagogy, and how "the teacher is always an authority". She cites Hunter (1988) who provides a provocative account of the development of "popular education" and how "the teacher" came to be positioned as a moral and political authority. By instituting popular cultural practices and techniques, the teacher was to encourage students' formation of personal attributes (p.124). Gore quotes Hunter:

> techniques for distributing individuals in supervisable spaces like the playground and the classroom; for passing all their activities through a grid of normalizing observations, for making them responsible for their own conduct, sentiments and use of time; and, above all, techniques which embody new 'social' norms in the purpose-built relations to the teacher in whose 'moral observation' each individual finds his [sic] own conscience. (quoted in Gore, p.124).

Gore states that we cannot overemphasize the teacher-student differentiation in the "machinery of supervision". She explains: "I am reminded of the radical classrooms in which despite efforts of the teacher to "de-center" him or herself, students still look to the teacher for approval and guidance, and of situations when grades are either minimized in importance or not given at all and yet, for many students, what matters most is the teacher's assessment". (p.124). What then is a teacher to do? Gore suggests that:

> The teacher cannot simply attempt to abolish his or her authority by maintaining an experiential realm in which "shared" narratives are assumed to equalize participants, and which, because the teacher and students learn from each other, is assumed to be a reciprocal enterprise. Nor can the teacher simply do away with the repressive potentials of his or her authority with a rhetoric of commitment to democratic relations both inside the classroom and outside. (p.125-126).

Given this perspective on pedagogy, Gore suggests that the teacher might do better to acknowledge and admit his or her exercise of authority vis-à-vis specific intentions - sometimes emancipatory, sometimes repressive, sometimes both, sometimes neither.

Part of my assumption too was that I took Liz's gender for granted. Because of her gender and what I took to be her warm personality, I felt that she could not pose a threat to anyone. I did not consider that even as women who teach in institutions of higher learning, we are also caught in the regulatory nature of these institutions, irrespective of our gender and whether or not we subscribe to a radical discourse. In a teacher-student relationship, the female teacher is perceived by all students, including males, as holding authority and are therefore influenced by this dynamics.

Reflecting further on this, I came to realize that the teacher-student dynamics are additionally affected if the teacher is a member of a dominant group where the student is from a minority group - a fact which, for me has been subconscious until now. I reflect on the composition of our group and the fact that two of us were raised in Africa and two were of Middle-Eastern descent. In being raised in a colonized African country, one of the tacit beliefs of our education (at least when I was in school) was that "the teacher is always right" and that we were not allowed to question or challenge him or her. Although I know that this is totally untrue, I still have some vestiges of this notion in me. This is probably true also of Bert, an African with whom I share a similar background. While I cannot say that this is true of other participants the fact that some were registered to have university credit for which Liz was responsible might have felt threatened.

I did not notice these dynamics during the initial group sessions, although I felt frustrated that we did not seem to be getting at the issues during the first two sessions. As I mentioned in chapter three, whenever a group of people come together, there is usually a period of testing, and getting to know each person's spaces, where they are and where they have been, before trust and openness begins to occur. However, Liz, though warm by nature, had the authority of an institution behind her, to which people reacted. The first two sessions were characterized by a question - answer activity where Liz and I had suggested at the initial meeting that each participant write down two or three problems/dilemmas, and outline some possible solutions or ways one might try to work out those problems. Participants had written down some pertinent problems/dilemmas that were shared during these sessions. Reflecting in my journal after the first session, I wrote:

> I am glad that every one came and participated in group discussions today. I finally have a group of people to work with!! I do not feel satisfied with the way discussions went today though. There seems to have been a flitting over of issues, I cannot feel the heartfelt sharing of stories in this group as I had in the Social Justice seminar that I attended in June. I did not say very much in the session today either, I was also not very comfortable, there seems to be a nudging fear that I may lose the participants. I can't quite put my finger on it. How can I get participants to share more deeply? Share my own story maybe? (Sept. 8, 1992).

My journal of this particular session reveals that I felt that we were not dealing with the issues about differences in a focused sort of way. A few issues were mentioned during that session, but they seemed so peripheral to our topic. Moreover, because of the question/answer mode of the session, I felt that participants were looking to Liz to provide "the answers", since she is the university professor. Although this was not what we had intended, we could not control what people thought or did. Thus the initial mutual testing, the composition of our group and the fact that students do look up to professors as "answer-givers", seemed to have influenced the dynamics of the group. Since I could not quite identify the problem at the time, I did not bring the issue to Liz for discussion.

From my journal also, my insecurity was evident. I felt insecure that I may lose participants having toiled hard to find people and therefore may need to abandon this topic and look for another. I was also perhaps insecure about how the participants may have perceived my role vis-à-vis Liz's role. Reflecting back on that, I did feel quite insignificant and doubted my ability to hold the group together.

It was during the third session that the personal stories began to emerge, and we started to concentrate less on what I thought was peripheral, and more on the issues that have touched us personally. Reflecting on the transcript, I observe that Liz talked much less than she did at the earlier sessions. At this time I was more certain of people's commitment in meeting regularly, so the initial fear I had of losing participants was no longer valid. I also was feeling more confident about asking participants to tell their personal stories. During the fourth session, the dynamics seemed to change when Liz was absent due to other commitments. Transcripts showed that participants talked more about how some of the issues related to, and affected them personally.

B. Power in the Role of the Researcher

Reflecting further on the theme of power relations in my study, I bring my role as the researcher under the same spotlight, and I suggest that it is implicitly a role of power. Ironically, although I might have felt insecure about my own significance in relation to Liz's presence, as the researcher, my role made it imperative for me to carry out the responsibilities that any research would mandate. For example, I initiated the research, initiated the topics to be covered, (although participants were invited to include some of theirs). I also searched for journal articles and decided on which were pertinent to our topic for us to read, review and share. Moreover, I searched for themes that we built on and further explored each week.

All of these activities represent responsibility as well as power to make certain decisions and guide people's thoughts in certain directions. So, like Liz, I was also caught in the regulatory nature of institutional requirements. The balance of power in this respect was tipped in my favor. I do feel, though, that participants did have the power to leave and refuse to continue to participate in the study. Part of my insecurity was because of my recognition of that power.

C. Power and Privilege of Dominant Group Members

The video, "*Eye of the Storm*", and Peggy McIntosh's paper (1989), "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack", served as the catalyst for much of our discussion on the theme of power and privilege of dominant group members.

The video features a teacher, Jane Elliot, who divided children in her third grade classroom into two groups, "blue-eyed" and "brown-eyed". She provided privileges for one group, and although not punishing the second group, more or less marginalized it. Her goal was to drive home lessons about power and privilege in American society, and how they affect groups of people, many times in very covert and subtle ways. She also did this activity with a group of adults who were paid their wages for the day. After the exercise on each of these occasions, Jane Elliot "debriefed" each group, asking for their responses to the treatment that she had meted out to them. The responses were very telling of the heartfelt and deep feelings that they had about the way they had been treated.

In her article, McIntosh (1989) argues that men are often unwilling to acknowledge that they gain advantages from women's disadvantages, thus perpetuating male privilege. She felt that since hierarchies in society are interlocking, there was a likely phenomenon of White privilege which was similarly denied and protected. She argues that although she had been taught to see racism as a phenomenon that puts others at a disadvantage, she had not "been taught to see one of its corollary aspects, White privilege, which puts her at an advantage" (p.10). She submits that describing White privilege makes one accountable, in that one must ask how to lessen or end it. McIntosh proceeded to identify some of the daily effects of White privilege in her life, choosing conditions that she thought attached somewhat "more to skin-colour privilege than to class, religion, ethnic status, or geographical location" (p.10), though she admits that these factors are all intertwined. She listed twenty-six such privileges, for example:

> 4. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
>
> 10. Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of my financial reliability.
>
> 22. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of race (p. 10-11).

McIntosh argues that the privileges which she listed are unearned, but conferred to her systemically by virtue of her race. She contended that these privileges should be the right of everyone in a truly just society.

In the following paragraphs, I discuss the sub-themes of power and privilege of a teacher, as well as White privilege which emerged from the study's group conversations on the above-mentioned video and article.

1. The Power of a Teacher

Nemo, responding to the "*Eye of the Storm*" reflected:

> and one guy was saying 'I wanted to speak up, but I didn't want to be shot down'. I guess as educators you don't realize how much power you have, to implement some things.

Clare felt that because of the power that teachers have, they must be very careful about what and how they implement their overt and hidden curriculum because of the lifelong effects that these may have on their students. She commented on Jane Elliot's strategy:

> She says that she thinks that teachers can learn and almost anybody can do this and I would query that because I think our life experience, if we stop and analyze, teaches almost all of us that we are a minority group. We might be female, we might be a different color, we might have an accent, we might be physically handicapped, we might be funny looking, we might be fat. So if you really look at it, the average isn't average at all, the average person, the okay person is in the minority, and yet somehow when we've come up through all of that most of us aren't sensitized the way those classes of children were and it stuck with them till adulthood. So I think she's doing something extremely powerful and that means intrinsically it's a little bit dangerous.

Reflecting about this later in her journal, Clare wrote:

> I admire this teacher very much, but fear that a few children could be damaged by going home "debriefed" over night. I don't feel comfortable trying this in my room where there are children of alcoholics, children who are new every few weeks, others who are very vulnerable. I'd like to know the unseen aspects - the context of her relationships - with these students and their families. What was there about her, their community, their era or

> whatever that left those children safe and growing through that traumatic but precious lesson? I'm not through sorting this out.

Clare reiterated her point about the risk in using Jane Elliot's experiential approach with children, who may already have emotional baggage that they bring with them to school. Recognizing her power as a teacher, she thinks of her pedagogical orientation to her students and therefore had to work through how best to sensitize children to other people's suffering and oppression without further damaging them emotionally.

Paul also felt that neither children nor adults always have the power to opt out of situations because they feel oppressed by someone who has power over them. He reflected on the movie:

> One lady said "Can I leave now? Can I leave?", and Jane Elliot said, "if you want to get paid for the day, you'll stay." She did have the option to leave, but she would like to pick up her paycheque. And in real life people do not have the option to leave.

Thinking about Paul's comment, I am reminded of many people, teenagers, men, women, even children, splashed across our newspapers, who, because of disillusionment and hopelessness are now "opting to leave" as it were, by putting an end to their own lives. Or it could be the lives of others for which they are incarcerated for life.

In another reflection on the power that teachers hold in the classroom, Clare stated that while it is ironic that many educators are feeling very powerless because of the demands placed on them by administrators, politicians, media and parents, they make decisions that have lasting effects on the child. She wrote:

> ...I believe that in responding to these impossibly heavy and sometimes conflicting demands, teachers are forced to define and refine their professional and personal values. Thus we choose which expectations we will buy into and which agendas will affect the lives of each child in our care. From this perspective, while we may feel and be extremely limited by society, we are still tremendously powerful people who have lasting effects on children and their families beyond our ability to comprehend. Unfortunately, people who are highly stressed are not in the best position to use their power in the most positive, creative, enlightened ways. At this point in time, teachers have a very heavy responsibility to care for themselves as much as possible so that students can thrive socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually, creatively and culturally.

It goes without saying that people who are less stressed are more able to cope with difficult situations, than those who are already stressed. Clare points very clearly to the fact that in order for teachers to use their power to the advantage of their students, engage in reflective action that will help their students thrive, they need to take care of themselves as well. She also acknowledges the lasting effects that teachers have on children because of the decisions that they make, and the need to be very careful about when, how, and what decisions we make for and about children.

2. White Privilege

In his response to the movie "*Eye of the Storm*", Bert expressed his view that Jane Elliot was mostly successful because she is herself White.

> Bert: At the same time I look at it from another perspective, somehow. I try to attribute the success of that program to the fact that the woman came from the mainstream, from the dominant culture, because she is White. ...But if somebody from China, from Asia, or a Black woman should take up that one, they'll say "look at these people" [said with disgust], I don't think people will respond to the program, they won't even attend.
>
> Sam: People would have shot her if she's a minority.

This dialogue points to the perspective of participants from minority groups. These statements portray one of the dimensions in the dynamics between dominant and minority group members. The dimension of privilege that comes from being from the dominant group. There are very many privileges accorded to dominant group members which are tacit and not acknowledged by those who enjoy such privileges. While they may acknowledge that minorities are disadvantaged, and therefore that we all need to work to improve the status of minorities, they may not accept that they themselves are privileged. This is the whole thrust of McIntosh's paper in which she listed many unspoken and unearned privileges that she enjoys just by virtue of being White.

Reflecting on my journal of September 8, 1992, I believe that my feeling of not being part of this privileged group, was probably one of the reasons for my fears that I may lose the participants, while hoping that Liz's presence would provide the buffer that I felt I needed to keep the group together. Thus, members of both the dominant and minority groups buy into this invisible system of privileges, which affects us all in one way or another.

McIntosh's article reverberates with Jane Elliot's experiential approach to teaching in the "*Eye of the Storm*". She had made very derogatory remarks about those she had put in her "blue-eyed" group, while she used very affirming words for those in her "brown-eyed" group. She used sentences like "they are smarter, they are cleaner, etc". to describe the "brown-eyed" group, while she used sentences like "they are always late, they are very dirty, why can't you do anything right?" - kind of sentences for her "blue-eyed" group. During our group conversations, we had a dialogue which reveals participants' thoughts about privilege. We had not yet read McIntosh's paper at this time.

> Ra: Does this happen in real life, or is it just being made up?
>
> Sam: I suppose if you are from a minority group, whatever it be, women, Blacks, Middle-Easterners, whatever the case might be, you might face something like that everyday. I'm not surprised, like, I mean, it happens, life is cruel, you know. It might not happen with the same ferocity, but nonetheless it does happen.
>
> Ra: Are you saying that it's more subtle?

Sam: It depends on the locale, it depends on the types of people you are around. Sometimes it may be subtle, sometimes very straight-forward, but nonetheless it happens.

Paul: It's not subtle, it's not uncommon. I worked at a bicycle shop, "Western Cycle" over here last summer. A native woman and man came in the store, and they were looking around, they were real shaky. Anyway they were just basically looking around, they were kind of talking to each other, it's more like a come in, and just get out [type of thing]. And one of the employees went over and actually, he just walked over and he said "can I help you?" And the lady said "you think we're going to steal something?, we got a right to look around in here just like everybody else". And the guy got back over to the counter and he said "look I was just asking whether I can help, and she said "do you think we are stealing or something? you are following us around like you don't trust us, and you are not bothering those White people over there", and he was kind of really hurt because that wasn't his intention. And I said "well, how many stores do you think she's had to walk into where people did think she was going to steal something before she built up that attitude?"

This conversation points further to minority group members' feelings about their disadvantaged status. In some instances, it is perceived rather than real, as evident by the above anecdote and my own example of a fear which I held at the beginning of the study. In other instances though, it is very real. It is very well documented that minorities are followed around in stores, or a keen eye kept on them to ensure that they do not walk away with something from the store.

It is very much like what is being experienced by the so-called generation X, where the youth are seen as "trouble", especially if two or more of them happen to enter into the same store! Clare indicated that "a drug store and a lot of other convenient stores around have signs saying "only three students at a time in the store". It is even doubly hair-raising for teens who are members of minority groups. Some store owners are said to think they have a major problem in their hands when these youth enter their stores.

As a minority in Canada I, like many others, sometimes wonder how to read someone's behavior towards me. For example, I sometimes wonder how to interpret a store employee's "may I help you?", or what sometimes seems like a lack of attention. When an employee asks the question "may I help you?", does it really mean that? or does it mean "I want you to be aware that I'm keeping my eyes on you in case you are planning on walking away with anything". At the same time, when I have not been attended to, I wonder whether to interpret the employee's behavior as "oh well, she's just window shopping" or "I know you have no money to buy anything, so I won't waste my time to attend to you" type of attitude.

It may be a flitting thought, but it does truly occur, and does show the burdens of worry, sometimes very unnecessary, that minorities carry with them because of a feeling of being unprivileged. Besides, it is true that people's nerves are on edge, when they feel that someone is suspicious or "watching" them. It is not surprising that the native people in Paul's anecdote were "real shaky".

On the other hand, I believe that some members of the dominant group must also carry a burden about how to relate or behave towards minorities, and wonder how to say or do things in a way that will not be misconstrued as racism or bigotry. I believe that there must be situations where members of the dominant group are unwilling to confront minority group members for fear of being called bigots, even though it would be appropriate to confront in such situations.

Because of the types of activities that our children participate in, each of them has often been one of very few minority children among a mostly White group. One of my friends, who now lives in the Northwest Territories once shared with me how uncomfortable it was for her to be at a party where she had been the only White person although she was among friends. This makes me wonder how our own children, now in their teens, feel in the midst of their best friends most of who happen to be White. Do they feel like fish out of water as my friend, Chris, said?

I have often wondered about this great divide and the fuels that drive the suspicion among races. I believe that it has its roots in the slave/master relationship that existed between Black and White people in the past. But then some other minorities do not carry that same stigma, and yet also experience this division that seems to be woven into the fabric of our society. Clare seems to connect this fuel of suspicion to the legacy of imperialism in our society. She pinned down the driving force in her reflections:

> Perhaps the Anglo-Saxon culture has a serious flaw - acquiring and concentrating and hanging on to power. I know the seeds of this culture are deep within me - God knows I talk long and intensely to make my own points. I have a picture of my first father's father sitting on a pony in India. They were there because my Great Grandfather was some high mucky muck out in the colonies making decisions for the masses in his capacity as army brass. Rule Britannia, and all that. I wonder how often I continue with this arrogance and do the same thing I hold against my ancestors.
>
> I wonder how I got to be the child in my family who fought against the overt racism in the church in which I was raised. What sensitizes mainstream children? I believe that my childhood abuse is a factor. It made me feel different; in fact it made me different and I still am atypical. I wonder how much bias I'm still living with and foisting on others.

Clare believes that this great divide is the result of a continued legacy of imperialism which established and perpetuated the myth of the supremacy of Britain and the British and everything else associated with her. Lamming (1995), a West Indian author refers to this myth which was and continues to be perpetuated by both the colonizer as well as the colonized mind, and how difficult it is to dislodge this myth. He stated how pleased he was when his first book received an important critical press in England, and how its reputation there was substantial. As a result of this acceptance in England at the time, it did not matter what people in any other country thought. He goes on to explain:

> ...This is what I mean by the myth. It has little to do with lack of intelligence. It has nothing to do with one's origins in class. It is deeper and more natural. It is akin to the nutritive function of milk which all sorts of men receive at birth. It is myth as the source of spiritual foods absorbed, and learnt for exercise in the future. This myth begins...with the fact of England's supremacy in taste and judgement: a fact which can only have meaning and weight by a calculated cutting down to size of all non-England. The first to be cut down is the colonial himself. (p.13-14).

In their book, The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (Eds.) (1995) explain how this myth was perpetuated through language, and how language is therefore a discourse of power. They wrote:

> ...[language] provides the terms and the structures by which individuals have a world, a method by which the "real" is determined...it implies certain assumptions about the world, a certain history, a certain way of seeing. If one's own language, or one's immediate perceptions of the world do not concur then they must be suppressed in favor of that which the language itself reveals to be "obvious". (p.55).

This statement is reminiscent of how words like the "third world", "the dark continent", have come to shape the thinking of both the colonizer and the colonized speakers of English in every part of the world. The education system and subject divisions in every colony was mirrored after that of England. In my own education, part of our core curriculum was English Language and Literature, European History which included topics about the scramble for Africa, and how Mungo Park discovered the Niger River, etc. The seed of a colonized mind was sown!

While European writers like the German philosopher, Hegel, asserted that Africa "is no historical part of the world" (quoted in Lamming, 1995), and thus shaping the thought of the West about Africa and Africans, I, like other Africans, also bought into the myth that Lamming explicated - White, represented by the colonizers, became synonymous with good - good taste, good judgement, and prestige. In the early days of Nigerian independence in the 1960s, a trip to England by any Nigerian conferred on him/her the ultimate prestige! My eldest sister's trip to England in 1963 to join and marry her fiancé suddenly catapulted my whole family into the limelight. We were regarded as the fortunate ones. Even those of us who did not step on the plane became the envy of our friends and neighbors! The propaganda machine of the English language, through our education, honed and perpetuated this myth. And while the British Empire has further shriveled, with the reversion of Hong Kong to the mother country of China, Britain still maintains cultural authority in post-colonial societies, including Canada and the United States.

The great divide then, continues to be fostered by this legacy of imperialism. That is why John Willinsky (1997), in his article "Accountability in Action", argues that as educators, we owe ourselves and our students an account of the educational legacy of imperialism. He states:

> When it comes to the legacy of imperialism, the account concerns, in its simplest terms, the continuing educational significance of such divides as East and West, primitive and civilized ... [The] heroes of European expansion took a knowing possession of the world, and had much that was educational to show for it. Yet in their nervous and excited grip on what they found, they divided land and people in ways that served this desire for global domination; they created an order for the world that formed a major chapter in the West's intellectual history. Imperialism was to foster a science and geography of race; it was to impose on others a language and literature of a born-to-rule civilization.
>
> We need an account of the learning and schooling sponsored by the exploration and colonization that still informs the West's vision of the world ... What imperialism made of the differences among people continues to cause dislocation and suffering; it contributes to a politics of identity that we need to learn again to assist a postcolonial world in transition. (p.420-421).

The account which Willinsky calls for, and which Clare reflects on in her journal, is about the lingering colonial intricacies in how we learn to peer across the divisions left behind by the colonial regimes. Willinsky explains that while "such scrutiny will [not] of itself dry up the wells of racism or end neocolonial forms of exploitation that remain part of imperialism's aftermath...I do think that the young are owed an explanation of how such divisions have come to mean so much..." (p.422). Willinsky argues that to succumb to the temptation to not drag up this troubling past, "...is not only a less than educational stance, it naively overlooks how students come to feel the divisions that prevail. This makes all the more poignant the fact that they are offered little to help them fathom why these divisions are so closely woven into the fabric of society." (p.422). If we neglect to give an account of how these differences have come to be, Willinsky suggests that students will take them as a "fact of nature rather than a result of historical struggle." (p.422).

In sum, participants suggest that White privilege which accords unearned advantages to one group, and disadvantage for others is a powerful force that causes suspicion and counter-suspicion, bias, bitterness, hatred, and insecurities, which has its roots in the legacy of imperialism. Clare's acknowledgement of this phenomenon makes her wonder how much bias she's still living with, and foisting on others.

Theme Three: Understanding Bias

In reflecting upon their practice, some of the participants articulated some of the biases which they held, but had not explored hitherto. Clare stated having a flash of insight that she had, in the process of reacting to what she thought was a racist comment by another teacher. She commented:

> I found out something about myself this week that I really don't like, and I'm suffering. A staff member in the staff room was talking about those Native kids and how they never come on time and my instant reaction was to think 'bigotry'. And then I have this very real flash of insight about myself because I have a problem, not so much with kids coming in late, but probably because I have four and five year olds and they can't do up their zippers, [or] their shoes and some of them can't do up their clothes after they go to the bathroom, so I am doing a lot of that stuff while I am trying to teach other skills too. I have a problem with kids

> who do have good fine motor skills and so on and they won't do up their zippers because they are used to service.
>
> I am not impressive to them because I do not go to them first and I had this awful blinding realization that I associate that with mostly male kids and mostly kids from the Chinese culture. Now that is not every Chinese male kid I have taught but it comes up fairly frequently and some East Indian families and in an instant I tried myself and I convicted myself because I really do have this bias and I just feel sick about it but I still have to do something because I am in the trenches with a whole bunch of kids with a whole bunch of needs... At almost 50 years old [I] still resent the kids who want service first all the time because I have also got kids that have pulled into themselves and they need nurture from me and encouragement to come out of their shell and I can only juggle so many before everything falls on the floor and I need to work through this, because I do not want to be resentful of four and five year old kids because they are doing exactly what they have been taught to do in their cultures. Just as valid as mine. I really do feel quite sick about myself right now, I am having a hard time liking myself because of this. That is how I spent my weekend thinking about this assignment. So if anybody has any hot ideas, I do not want to damage the kids' self esteem and I have to pull mine out of the toilet.

Clare's philosophy of teaching indicated earlier on is to treat each child with sensitivity. This philosophy is an outgrowth of her own understanding of rejection and pain as she grew up with her extended family. Her black hair meant that she could not choose the role she wanted to play during Thanksgiving reenactment. Clare brings this memory into her classroom, remembering her own pain and isolation of feeling different and being treated differently. Thus in her practice, she endeavors to protect her students from such a memory. It was therefore a great shock for her to realize that in spite of all her efforts to be accepting and loving of every child, she was biased against a certain type of child. She believed that she was treating each child equally and was now beginning to find that she probably did not. In her own experience, she had not felt accepted by some members of her family, and consequently suffered from a lack of self-esteem as she was growing up. She recalls this experience and became fearful of damaging her students' self-esteem which she had been working hard to build in her classroom. She realized that this will only serve to defeat her very purpose of helping all children feel accepted.

Clare expressed extreme guilt and heartfelt remorse for her bias and wondered how she might protect the children from absorbing the bias that she had against them. Clare felt that she had a hidden belief system that she had absorbed through the pores, even though she is very conscious of her value for other people's differences. Clare was jolted by an earnest exploration of her belief system which makes her reexamine her own practice and how she interacts with children.

In another conversation about differential treatment of boys and girls in the classroom, Sherie-Mae asks Nemo if he treats his male and female students differently. Following is the conversation that ensued within the group.

> Sherie-Mae: Do you treat boys and girls differently [for example], if a boy is sort of trying to be the clown of the class or when a girl is trying to get all the attention, is there a difference in your [response]?

> Nemo: As far as my class is concerned, I have all Arab kids. Culturally, I expect the girls to be well behaved. It's a fact that the girls are more quiet and timid, whereas the boys are outgoing and they have the opportunity, it is given to them. But I have a few girls that are the opposite in the sense that my boys are well behaved and these girls are not... Culturally, I am not expecting such from these girls. These girls have their scarves on and I am thinking, 'aren't these supposed to be respectful young ladies?' and its coming from this group of girls. So I am just shocked. I am not expecting it from them. It is a surprise, I am thinking "my God!".
>
> Nemo: Sometimes you expect the boys to be like that and you are going to handle it differently. But when you see the girls and you see what is going on, you wonder why this is happening or shouldn't be happening. It is interesting, because, especially this year, I told the teachers that when I first went into [the class], I expected the boys to get me worked up but it is the opposite. The girls throw me off-guard with the things that happen and they definitely try my patience, but the way I have dealt with them so far is on an individual basis. I have to talk to them. They know what I expect and usually we go over what my expectations are and what the school's expectations are and whether they are following them or not. And usually they are not and they admit it and they are sorry.

When I asked whether his male students are quiet, Nemo responded:

> I won't say they are quiet I just expected them to be the ones to get into mischief, causing the problems. I was amazed when I started this year that it wasn't the boys, it was the girls. I was shocked, I was really shocked... I knew I had the boys on my side in a sense, if I wanted, but the girls? No. It was strange because in the younger grades it was 50/50. I didn't have to try to get the girls on my side it was just natural, but this year it was strange because the boys were so cooperative with me, behavior wise, work wise, and the girls? It was like "Wow!". I was so surprised.

Nemo's response to Sherie-Mae's question is very revealing. He went into his elementary classroom with a type of female in mind. After all, the girls had their scarves, which probably meant that they were more "obedient" to religious and parental rules and regulations. Nemo also felt that he understood the students' culture well enough to know that "girls are supposed to be well behaved", he was also raised in the culture. He also expected from knowing the culture that the male students will be the ones that he will have problems with. He expected that what he had always "known" of Arab females, timid, passive, and introverted, would be true of his female students. However, it came as a shock when he found that his female students do not fit into his stereotypical mold of Arab Moslems females. He found that he had misjudged both the male and female students. Because of his mind-set, he was prepared to handle what he thought would be mischief from his male students, and by the same token was very unprepared for being thrown "off-guard" by his female students, who also tried his patience.

Reflecting on Nemo's understanding, I am left to wonder about the sorts of "mischief" that the female students got into, and whether his perception of their misbehavior was clouded by his expectations. Since he had expected that he would have no difficulties at all from the female students, but was suddenly confronted with these unexpected problems, it is quite possible for Nemo to have overreacted.

In his discussion of Schutz's notion of natural attitude, Barber (1989) wrote:

> The natural attitude... tends to suppress reflection and divergent viewpoints. Since the pressing pragmatic purposes of the natural attitude leave little time for questioning, the member of the cultural in-group resorts to "the ready-made standardized scheme of the cultural pattern handed down to him by ancestors, teachers, and authorities as an unquestioned and unquestionable guide in all the situations which normally occur within the social world"... While this reifying tendency easily leads to overlooking the conscious, interpreting activity of the Other, it is also reinforced by the social style of the natural attitude, in which it is generally assumed that everyone obviously sees things the same way (p.124).

Thus, Nemo's natural attitude is the unquestioned cultural pattern that Arab Moslem females are well behaved, quiet, and passive. His reflection allowed him to bring the tacit assumptions of the natural attitude to a conscious level of awareness and enabled him to see his own bias against his female students.

As our group further reflected on gender bias, Liz wondered whether we set different standards for male and female students. She stated:

> Liz: ... Are we interpreting the school expectations in different ways for girls or boys? ... I guess I can't help but think of having a daughter and trying to instill in her from very early on that she could be whatever she wanted to be and could excel in any subject she chose to excel in if she had the motivation and so forth and that it was all right to excel, and then she hits junior high, and while a lot of people I know and work with would believe that to be so, there are still a lot of people in society that don't feel that girls are the same as boys in terms of academic excellence or in

> behavior and it's not really an equal world in those cases for girls and boys.
>
> It then poses a real problem because you have raised someone to believe that it is so and they go into the world believing it to be so because their mother or their father or whatever has promoted this, and then they see it differently. I'm wondering for those girls, what if they had parents who said 'you have every right to speak up in class or to do certain things as the boys even though traditionally that wasn't so, but we are in Canada, there are equal rights for girls and boys, men and woman.' And then they get into a situation and it really isn't that way yet, that we do allow more rough housing with boys than we do with girls.
>
> Are we somehow inadvertently expecting girls not to do as well in science? That was in the paper tonight that there is a group thinking of setting up a private school for girls in Alberta because there is enough proof showing that they aren't excelling in science or math even though there is no reason to believe they aren't equally as capable in those subjects. I think there still are some double standards. I think we all sort of have hidden subconscious beliefs about how things are that maybe we don't even explore.

Nemo's expectations of his female students seem to be an example of the issues raised in the foregoing anecdote by Liz. She raises the very important question of tacit double standards that we as educators set for both boys and girls. The experience of Liz's own daughter who has been told from early on that she could be whatever she wants to be, and getting to junior high to see that others felt and behaved differently about females, reiterates the realization that Nemo had about his own bias. Several studies show that teachers inadvertently treat both sexes differently, sometimes making excuses for what they feel might be a feature of a particular sex. This differential treatment, which seems to put females at a disadvantage, is a latent feature of many societies to which children are exposed through a combination of sources like parents, extended family, neighbors, teachers, friends, television, movies and so forth. In a study by members of the Anti-Bias Curriculum Task Force which developed the anti-bias approach to curriculum in Early Childhood Education, anecdotes of young children's statements were collected and analyzed for a year. The anecdotes reveal that at a very early age, children have absorbed the tacit inequities in society. Derman-Sparks (1993) gives some examples of the anecdotes.

> Steven is busy being a whale on the climbing structure in the 2-year-old yard. Susie tries to join him. "Girls can't do that!" he shouts.
>
> "You aren't really an Indian," 4-year-old Rebecca tells one of her child care teachers. "Where are your feathers?" (p.67).

In the group conversations during this research, Nemo showed those tacit inequities by making excuses for the boys, saying that he expected them to be the ones to get into mischief, rather than the girls. By the same token, in his mind, it was acceptable for a female to be passive and timid. This seems to be in antithesis to his comment when he asked the female students about their long range goals. He commented:

> ...I ask a lot of kids what their long range goals are. Some of [the females] say they'll get married, and have kids. They are at the age where they are starting to think about what they want in their future, but it is discouraging to hear the females within this group say they don't know. They are not encouraged to pursue education...

Nemo does not seem surprised by the response of the female students rather he is discouraged by it. Yet, a necessary ingredient in the pursuit of knowledge is the ability to ask questions, to be less timid, and to participate actively in the learning process. If the girls are absorbing the message that passivity and being "nice" and quiet is valued by the teacher, perhaps, it is not too surprising that there is not much desire to pursue education.

I can relate to some extent to Nemo's students. In my own societal culture, male children seem to be more valued. Before popular education, when people's schooling was paid for by the government, all of a family's resources went into educating only male children, as was also the case when Clare was growing up in the United States. It was different though in my family in that my father encouraged and supported all of us financially, irrespective of gender, to pursue Western education. Although my mother played the role of a traditional housewife in my early years, my father believed strongly that "if you educate a male, you educate an individual, and if you educate a female, you educate a whole generation". He felt that if a female was educated, she would in turn educate her children and even her grandchildren. Although society in general treated women, at that time, as second-class citizens, I was blessed with some male teachers who seemed interested in my education, and who reinforced at school what my parents did at home.

Theme Four: The Need to Create a Climate of Trust

In dealing with students' cultural and racial differences, Clare felt that it is imperative for her to create a climate of trust with her students' families. She sees the need to be a good listener with regard to what the families need. Trust featured strongly in our group conversations:

> Clare: I feel that my families can't relax enough to effect any change until they trust that I'm not going to batter their values... I write down all of the needs of all families who have religious needs...and I think that they know that I am not out to have war with them on the battlefield of their child and I think then they relax, and they let in some more of the school things that I might otherwise do.
>
> Sometimes as a child, I felt like my religious culture, probably my mother's immigrant culture, but for sure, my religious culture made me really different and it wasn't fun, I hated it. I went to great pains to keep things at home and at school separate and that was very uncomfortable for me, that wasn't mentally healthy, but I did what I needed to do to try and take care of myself. So I just really try and bridge [between the school and the home for the child], and hopefully then, the anxiety goes down, and we can have less of what could be minority paranoia when people like me who have some authority over their child could be pushing their child into things that are very frightening and painful and threatening to them...
>
> Paul: I think most parents are accepting of the fact that school is a different place than home. Everything is not going to be the same as at home. The real problem is, if they sense that what is at home is being devalued by the school, or attacked by the school, that's where the problem is, that's where the real anxiety comes in.
>
> Clare: [I need to] set up a climate where people can listen. When they know I want to cooperate with them, then I think they are much more willing to hear what I have to say about, gee, 'it looks like your child could be wonderful at this or that, or I see talent in this area, or have you ever

> considered such and such lessons or whatever. I think that is less threatening to them if I am valuing, not their values, but their right to have their values.... And of course my line would be if there was anything really violent or vicious, like I don't value the right of someone who is involved in a satanic culture to be abusing their child. So I do have my bottom line.
>
> Sam: Trust comes, as Clare said ... when you show them that you are valuing their differences, and you are making an effort to meet them somewhere halfway, then you will gain their trust. An incident happened in our school a couple of years ago, where the teachers know that the Arab kids [do] not eat pork. They are not allowed to have pork... We invited all the kids to a year end picnic, and a teacher went and bought all pork hot-dogs. How can you gain trust if you know my values, and you don't [respect] them?
>
> Nemo: Being in the teacher's shoes, it's reassuring when you know you have the parents' trust, you are much more relaxed in a sense... It's a nice feeling.
>
> Clare: When I feel that they trust me, then we can plan together because I get parents to help me write my report cards too, so I am trying not to be up on a pedestal. I am trying to empower the parents and the children to be part of the process with me...

The above conversation points to the fact that trust is extremely essential in working with families from diverse cultural backgrounds. Trust seems to be an important issue for participants because they live, teach and work in a society that is rife with mistrust. As I indicated in my discussion of the theme of White privilege, relationships between dominant and minority group members seem to be characterized by suspicion and counter-suspicion, paranoia and insecurities among groups.

The history of immigration to Canada reveals an often bitter encounter between new immigrants from various parts of the world and their Anglo-Canadian reluctant hosts. In his examination of Anglo-Canadian views of multiculturalism in the twentieth century, Palmer (1984) suggests that:

> "The assimilation theory which achieved early public acceptance was Anglo-conformity. This view demanded that immigrants renounce their ancestral culture and traditions in favor of the behavior and values of Anglo-Canadians" (p.21).

Similarly, in her discussion of the history of Native Education in Canada, Ghosh (1996) wrote:

> Education was the vehicle of Native assimilation in nineteenth-century Canada. The education of Native children was aimed at socializing the young generation with European, Christian, and capitalist values and aspirations. It denigrated First Nations cultures and society in an attempt to remake them in the colonizer's image (p.24).

Although many Anglo-Canadians have accepted and proclaimed the desirability of Canada's ethnic diversity, the suspicion and paranoia that characterized the role of schools in the assimilation of First Nations and immigrant children during the early days of Confederation, continues to exist. It is within this persistent climate of mistrust that participants in this study teach.

Participants felt that creating an atmosphere in which there is openness, and the lack of fear by parents that their values will be put down is key to the heart of the parents. Clare's metaphor of the child as the battle-field, when it comes to unhappy encounters between home and school conjures one's imagination of war, devastation, bitterness, destruction, hostility and casualties. Although unhappy encounters may not reach such devastating proportions, this powerful metaphor discloses that where there is "war" and mistrust between the home and the school, the real casualty is the child who has to live both at home with his/her parents and also attend school to be taught by the teacher. What ensues in such a situation might be a child's lack of enthusiasm to go to school, an inability to concentrate and focus on school work, the feeling of paranoia and utter discomfort with the teacher, particularly at school.

Since such a possibility exists if there is no cooperation between the home and the school, Clare felt the need to continually act as a bridge for the child, so that parents' distrust and anxiety about her position of authority over their children can be lessened. She recalls her own experience in which her religious culture conflicted with that of the school, and how she had to go to great pains to keep both the home and the school separate. This resonates with the experiences of Nemo and his students, discussed earlier, who have to live separate lives at home and at school because of differences in values.

Clare's goal to lessen "minority paranoia" point to her awareness that her position of authority over children can be threatening and painful to parents. She alludes to the fact that this is even more so in a culturally diverse context where she is not only representing the dominant group by virtue of her ethnicity, but also having legal authority to teach students who are minorities. This double power which she has over the children may cause paranoia and suspicion among minority parents.

Paul and Sam indicated that for parents to be trusting of teachers and the schools which they represent, action must be consistent with words. Paul points out that parents begin to be anxious when they sense that the school devalues what they stand for. Sam's example of the teacher who bought all pork hot-dogs for a picnic in which Arab Moslem students were to partake, reveals a lack of sensitivity to the dietary needs of the Arabs. It also reveals that a teacher's behavior may or may not encourage trust building. Sam felt that actions such as the teacher's who knows the dietary restrictions of Arab Moslems and yet purchases pork hot-dogs, does not encourage trust building in the school.

Both Nemo and Clare indicate the benefits of a trusting relationship between the home and the school. Nemo points to the feeling of reassurance that can result from feeling trusted by parents. It is true that when one feels trusted, one feels accepted. Clare argues that when she feels trusted by parents, then, it is much easier to make suggestions to them about how their child may benefit from various extra-curricula activities. Clare's belief is that parents would take her more seriously and be more accepting of her suggestions about how their children could grow further in areas that she has observed in the classroom, if she has been able to build a relationship of trust with them.

Clare also made an important distinction between valuing families' rights to have values, and valuing their values. The first deals with the fact that one may not necessarily subscribe to some of the values of one's students; however, one must respect their right to have their own values. This position calls for a non-judgemental attitude towards values that one may not care for or subscribe to as an educator. Clare indicated that she has a line beyond which she cannot cross, and that is when she feels the child is being abused, indicating that the child's emotional and/or physical well being is at stake. The second position deals not only with respect for someone else's rights to have values, but actually subscribing to those values as well. However, since there are as many views as there are people, participants feel that there is need to mediate and negotiate paths that conflict, on behalf of the students they work with.

Theme Five: The Need to Negotiate Conflicting Paths

Conflict among cultures and individuals is a phenomenon in any pluralistic society. However, when people are accepting of others due to cultural or other differences, it is still possible to have issues dear to each person's heart that may conflict with someone else's. This theme also featured strongly in our conversations.

> Paul: ...There are occasions when maybe the value system in the culture would conflict so sharply with our own on an issue where you have very strong personal feelings.

One example of a conflict between the home and the school was given by Sam. He commented:

> ...Sometimes we put pressure on these kids too, and they are caught between the pressure of the home and the pressure of the school. For example, yesterday, a [student's] father came to the school. He told me there was a teacher here who wants to force his daughter to go and swim. He has been bothering the parents for about three or four days, calling them and telling them that this is Canada, and their daughter has to go and swim. The kid has been under pressure from her teacher to swim and from her parents not to swim.

Sam expressed the fact that tremendous pressure is put upon children when there is conflict between the home and the school. The example given by Sam generated a lot of discussion, and also focused on how we, as educators, must approach such an issue. Participants express the need to negotiate these conflicts in a way that children will not be caught in the middle. On a similar topic, an Arab teacher had taken some Arab girls to the swimming pool where there was a male lifeguard. According to Islamic religion, this is a taboo. While swimming is permitted, male and female instruction must be handled by instructors of the same gender, and the lifeguard must also be of the same gender as the swimmers. Even though there were female instructors in this case, unknown to the Arab teacher, the lifeguard was a male. This infuriated the female parent volunteer who had helped to take the group for swimming. The parent demanded an explanation, and having been told that it was an honest mistake, the issue was resolved. Nemo suggested that the issue was quickly resolved because the teacher was an Arab herself. Following are excerpts from our group conversation.

> Liz: Why did you say that [because] it was an Arabic teacher that made a big difference. I mean could it not have been any teacher?...
>
> Nemo: I think she was able to handle the situation better... It made a difference because she knew where that lady was coming from, she knew what it means to her. Because she has the same religious background which is more forceful than a cultural one. When you are dealing with religion, a taboo, it is more forceful or more powerful than a cultural type of thing. To her you are breaking a law, you are breaking a taboo.
>
> Paul: The other advantage is that the Arabic teacher was negotiating this stuff with an Arabic parent and because of the common background, I think she is more likely to be successful in negotiating a concession because the motive might not be as suspect.
>
> Nemo: I think in this culture the Arabic parents have more trust in the Arabic teacher, that they would know what is right and what is wrong for their kids, since they are of the same background as their children.

The above conversation pinpoints the main issue in cultural conflicts. The issue comes down to the question "Do you know me well enough to serve my interests in your school or class?" In another written reflection, Nemo reiterates this question. He asked: "But how can one become sensitive to another person if one has absolutely no knowledge or background of that person's way of life or heritage?" Resolving culturally conflicting paths takes us back to the issue of trust. Nemo suggested that in order for parents to be more trusting of teachers, the teachers must be from the same background. If this is true, it renders futile the purpose for this research. With our world shrinking more and more into a global village and the present speed and rate of travel that characterize movement on our planet, the possibility that we will continue to live in even more pluralistic societies is a reality.

If what Nemo suggests occurs, then the segregation that was abolished in the United States in the late 1950s would return, as children would be separated into little clusters in order to be taught by someone with a similar background. This has even greater implication for a community. If we cannot work towards building trust in order to live together, then any city would have different sections to which different ethnic groups will gravitate. If we do not have the knowledge and understanding of a person's cultural background, how can we become sensitive to his/her needs? I believe that this question represents the whole thrust of this research. Participants have identified the need to be aware of their own biases, for in becoming aware the tacit inequities are brought to a conscious level of awareness. I have also examined participants' understanding about the need to continually build trust in a climate of persistent mistrust. It is also imperative to make efforts toward respecting and affirming diversity, for as Clare pointed out, there is no norm to determine what is average. Reflecting on this issue further, Paul suggests that we, as educators, need the skills to negotiate these conflicting paths, and we must have at the back of our minds the interest of the children, who happen to carry the burden whenever there is conflict between the home and the school. He commented:

> You have to be a salesperson if you're a teacher. The best thing that can happen for the kid is that the parents come to some sort of understanding and willingly permit what it is you are requesting. So, for the kid you have to do your best to sell the kid to the parents, whether you make compromises to do it or whatever. If you push to the point where you stand on law and the parent is against it and then the law enforces it, then you damage the kid at home.

Sherie-Mae suggests that everyone's interest must be taken into consideration. She said:

> I think that rather than get defensive or say it has to be my way, that you sit down and try to work out the best for the child or the whole situation. Look at the whole picture not just some parents' point of view.

The above statements reiterate the points made earlier on about being the bridge for children so that they do not become the casualty in the conflict between the home and the school.

Theme Six: Making Efforts to Respect and Affirm Cultural Differences.

In educating students from diverse cultural contexts, participants emphasize the need to respect and affirm cultural differences. One of the expressed difficulties in one of the Arabic bilingual program is the insensitivity of Arab students to one another. Reflecting on his own practice, Nemo suggested a possible change in what he will teach, and the order in which he will teach social studies in future. He suggested:

> Sometimes you should start with them instead of "China"... [There are] many examples of the tension among the Arab students in general. So sometimes you've got to start with them, and try to encourage them to become sensitive to their own kinds ... Each year we have immigrants coming from home, from the Arab world, and it's incredible how kids who have been born and raised here, don't accept their own kind, somebody with their own values, their own language. [The immigrants are] treated like outcasts, and have so many problems. And it's sad to see, as a teacher, when you try your best to get them to provide a nice landing pad for these kids.

Nemo reiterated this point in a group conversation expressing concern for the way in which Arab students show a lack of sensitivity towards other Arab students as well as other minorities. He commented:

> One good thing about the curriculum is that it gives us opportunities to study other cultures, but I think our job as educators is to get the kids to become sensitive to other people's cultures and at the same time be

> sensitive to their own. For example, yesterday, we were just reviewing Canada and we were talking about how the Chinese settled into B C, and I heard a few racial slurs that 'oh, we're studying Chinks.' And this is a class of Arab children. So, you know the next unit that we'll take is [on the] Chinese. Hopefully, my job will be to [encourage] these kids to become sensitive to the Chinese and to help them realize that we're a group that face the same racial slurs as them, and that we have to become sensitive to them, as we become more sensitive to our own...

An examination of Nemo's reflections point to a concern for students with whom he shares the same background. As a result of his own upbringing in a country where he experiences being a minority, he seems to bring into teaching the Arab students the sort of insight and understanding of the students that someone from another culture might not be able to bring. He identifies with, and stands in solidarity with his students, using "we" whenever he refers to their cultural background. "We are a group that face the same racial slurs", he says. He expressed the sensitivity with which he teaches the Arab students, because "they face the same kinds of problems that I faced when I was growing up". As a result of this, Nemo has the advantage that he has also experienced similar situations, and can therefore bring insight, understanding and vision into teaching his Arab students.

Clare suggests that setting the tone of a classroom to enable children who are different to be comfortable is of extreme importance.

> Clare: I still think racism was an issue for me when I was a child, and that hurt me and then I became aware of sexism later which is odd because I had always experienced sexism and just took it for granted... But I think now that we still have to deal with our ageism in this culture and so I guess what I really see the problem as, is [lack] of tolerance in our culture. When I had a little blind child in my class and parents were talking about "the blind boy" so were some of the children. But it didn't take them very long before they started calling him by his name, and talking about what funny stories he told and how he liked chocolate...he very quickly became a person to all of us, but initially, the label was related to his disability. One might think it is so easy in kindergarten to set a tone where you can get through that stage. I don't think it was nearly as easy. That is why I'm resentful that in my childhood, I had so little diversity. I think that was a crippling factor for me and just about everybody my age in our North American culture.

Clare is very careful to make a blind boy comfortable in her kindergarten room. Noting parents' and children's reactions to his disability, Clare set the tone for others to follow very quickly. By referring to him by name, instead of "the blind boy", and by modeling an accepting relationship to him, "the blind boy" quickly became a person like the rest of the class.

Reflecting further on her practice, Clare stated the way in which she promotes respect for, and affirmation of, cultural diversity. In our group conversations, she expressed her strategy in helping culturally different families to feel welcome in her classroom. She said:

> I just try and encourage the parents. I tell the parents at the beginning of the year that I think education is a lot like an orchestra and if I am a violin, I will be the best darn violin I can. But I teach out of myself. I only have one background, and one set of talents, and if they'll come in, then, pretty

> soon we will have pianos and tubas and we'll have a whole symphony of experience for the kids. So I try and leave it open ended and encourage them if they celebrate a different holiday or if they have some different foods or if they do some cultural dances or if they've been to a place and brought back pictures to just bring them in to the room and make it richer, and I tell them it's social studies...

Clare expressed indignation about having to justify the activities in her room as "Social Studies" to her school administrator on two different occasions. Using the music metaphor of a symphony, Clare sees herself as only one instrument (the violin). And while a violin can play beautifully, the music is more heavenly when there is a harmony of all the string and wind instruments. Thus, she felt that she needed the involvement of culturally different parents in order to succeed in promoting and affirming differences.

Theme Seven: Self-understanding that Liberates and Acts

McIntosh's article, discussed on pages 135-136, was a catalyst for self re-examination for Clare as she thought further about the notion of power and privilege for dominant group members. In her journal reflections, she shared the following thoughts:

> This is a tremendously important article for me. I am in the process of change because you shared it Rachel. Thank you. Catalyst is valuable! I have carefully read and reread Peggy McIntosh's list of unearned privileges. Those which I highlighted in pink were facts which I had not

> consciously considered. There were five "Ah ha!" realizations in this list for me.
>
> One point did not ring true for me. Peggy says that she can shop alone, most of the time, pretty well assured that she will not be followed or harassed. I don't ever feel that safe when I'm away from home, or when I'm home alone. I believe that this is a result of my preschool abuse, which was not rooted in racial violence, but rather in sexist and ageist attitudes. The after-effects are my basis for whatever empathy I have for people suffering from pain which I have not experienced. I'm glad Peggy feels safe, but I can't relate.
>
> Because this article has been such a powerful catalyst for me, I have started to expand Peggy's list. I'm sure I'll still be doing this a year from now. I feel more "whole" and empowered every time I dig another shard of unearned assets out of my subconscious.

Clare's journal not only reveals that her reflections are beginning to point her towards action, a point that I developed in the preceding paragraphs, and will further develop, it also reveals other forms of power and privilege granted to males and to older people. I must point out that people who are considered "old" are very vulnerable, and media reports point to the many ways in which they are taken advantage of. I discussed the notion of gender bias in chapter two, and earlier in chapter four, but I must mention that the same tacit privilege accorded to members of the dominant group is also granted to males, as seen in Nemo's rude awakening, and to older people. I do believe that there is nothing wrong in being respectful of age. In my African culture, a difference in age commands respect of the older person by the younger. However, the principle of fairness must apply. We cannot have one standard for children and another standard for adults. Children are to be treated with the same respect that they have for adults. Instead, the media is filled with news about men who terrorize and violate women, and older people (men and women) who act similarly toward younger people.

One of the results of self-understanding is that it spurs us into action in areas where we may have been passive or neutral before that understanding. Although I follow with an account of the action that Clare took as a result of her understanding, other participants, like Nemo, began to approach their teaching in a different way, as indicated earlier. After the end of our group meetings in December 1992, I received a letter from Clare. She had received a letter from a company which distributes children's clothes and felt that she needed to share it with me. In her letter, she explained the background to the letter. She wrote:

> As background to the enclosed letter, I stayed at the Banff Springs Hotel two years ago. There was a delightful children's boutique in the hotel which was very appealing to anyone shopping for a small child. To a new grandmother, it was totally irresistible. Needless to say, after a substantial purchase my name went on the mailing list. Consequently, in early November 1992, I ordered the most adorable dress in the western world complete with optional matching barrettes and handbag. There was even a small doll, clothed just like "mommy", which fit in the pocket of the pinafore. ... There was only one less than perfect aspect to this whole charming gift. The doll had arrived with short red hair while [my granddaughter's] is long, wavy and black. All the more fun, since my youngest son's fiancee was at our home when the parcel arrived. A few minutes with scissors, fabric glue and black wool were all that was needed to create a wig ready to be sewn in place. Our excuse was that

> two-year-olds need "babies" who look as much like their parents as possible, but we were really having a splendid time playing dolls.
>
> Still, in bed that night I thought about how easy it was to personalize the hair and how impossible it is to alter the bedsheet white complexions of the dolls which my grandchild and all my kindergarten students love. The next morning I mailed another letter ordering more [items]... I also commented on the superb quality of [their] products. Then I raised the issue of the pocket doll. I said that I taught school in a culturally and ethnically diverse community and wondered if their staff had thought about offering dark and mid-range skinned dolls as well as the White one featured in the catalogue. I pointed out that what seemed like a very small thing actually had deep and long lasting effects on the confidence and self esteem of my Black, Asian, East Indian and Indigenous pupils. I also mentioned that as a White woman, I would be very interested in ordering dolls of various hues for my own family. I requested a response in the new year after the seasonal flurry had died down.
>
> December twenty-first brought the second box with [the items] and the appended letter. The critical point in this whole interchange, for me, is not the fact that I realized how offering only white toys contributes to racism. For whatever reasons, I've been more sensitive to this issue than my homogeneous family of origin since I was a preschooler. What is critical for me is that attending our class with other people who care about diversity has influenced me enough that I sat down and penned one routine letter which effected a small positive change.

The letter that Clare had shared from the company thanked her for her order and compliments, and went on to read:

> Your ideas about making different colored dolls are great - we're always open to suggestions! We'll certainly get to work! It's a very valid point, since we're in a country with so many ethnic backgrounds!...

Clare's self re-examination continued long after our group conversations ended. She began to examine with fresher eyes some of the tacit, unspoken messages that she had here-to-fore taken for granted. Purchasing a Christmas present for her grandchild and seeing the difference in the doll spurred Clare into action to help others begin to think of their own assumptions.

In this chapter, I developed themes which provide insight into participants' understandings about possibilities for education in culturally diverse contexts. The Ah! Ah! realizations, the shock, guilt and remorse, and self-understanding that followed when we uncovered tacit assumptions are invaluable. In the next chapter, I examine the implications of these understandings for educators, teacher education and myself.

Chapter V

Concluding Reflections

> When the natural attitude's blinders to Otherness fall from our eyes, we can recognize some of our own intentionalities, including relevances, through which the world is given to us, as never before, as well as recognizing that other intentionalities are possible and that our own are not absolute. (Barber, M. 1989, p.119).

In this chapter, I reflect on my space - the space from which this study emerged, and the possible spaces to which it may lead. I examine what the study means to me as a person, as an educator, and as a researcher. As a person, I reflect upon the road taken in this research, and how my spaces have influenced not only the choice of the topic, but also the writing of it. As an educator, I have selected three of the themes that emerged from the study to reflect on, raising questions about power and privilege, trust, and negotiating cultural conflicts. As a researcher, I reflect on the question of collaboration in this study revealing how it led to a deeper self-understanding about my praxis. I then examine the implications of this study for education in culturally diverse contexts, for educators, for teacher education and for policy.

A. Reflections on What the Study Means to me

1. As a Person

I began the study by writing about the space from which this study emerged. My space includes that of being a spouse, a parent, an educator and a minority within Canada. In my country of origin, not only are some of these spaces different, I also occupy more spaces. As a result of these spaces and the road that I chose to take, the way I view the world is different from the way anyone else might view it. This study has helped me to see how my view of the world is different as a minority in Canada. Coming, living and working here has opened up new vistas of understanding that I would not have had in my country of origin. I have come to appreciate even more my cultural roots which I took for granted until I came to Canada. I reflect on the tacit, but powerful, psychological hold that the legacy of colonialism continues to have on myself and people with whom I share a similar colonial history. This study has enabled me to pinpoint the roots of that hold, and with it a greater ability to cope with the disadvantages of the legacy. With this understanding, I feel I have grown in my ability to look beyond the obvious everyday world and become more discerning of the underlying meaning of people's experiences.

For me, this research journey has been a very long one. One of the deviations from the journey was a new job which took me away to the University of Alaska to teach for several years. Yet, my experiences there fed into what I needed to learn in order to complete this journey. I left Canada with a battered and bruised self-esteem, suffering from a crisis in my identity, and came back with a better understanding of my self-worth which enabled me to make myself vulnerable. My ability to do this was a very necessary ingredient in my becoming, and in reaching the deeper level of self-understanding which this study called for. I was enabled to see my own assumptions and respond reflectively on my initial agenda. Moreover, although I could discuss some of my new learnings with colleagues, I struggled to commit some of the issues to writing. However, the fear of writing some of what I saw emerging from the study that plagued me initially, soon gave way to a most rewarding experience, as I was forced to reflect critically on our group and individual conversations and clarify my thoughts.

2. As an Educator

a. The Question of Power and Privilege

As I reflected and wrote chapter IV, and had a better insight into the legacy of imperialism and how it affects all of us, I recall the years that I taught at a Nigerian University. One of the subjects that I taught was History of Education in Nigeria to first year undergraduate students in a Department of Educational Foundations. I recall how I taught the course, and how much was left out of the history books about our true legacy of imperialism. There was much in the literature about some of the legacy, namely, the continual use of English Language (which presents the world from a particular perspective), as a medium of education, the way in which commerce is carried out, the organizational systems that were inherited at independence, and so on.

One essential aspect that was left out, though, is how the imperial legacy has taken us captive psychologically, and how this has affected all areas of our lives. I will clarify my point by using three examples. First, most Africans long for products that are made in the West. Any product made in Britain, or the USA is considered better, even if one made locally seems much better. If it does not carry the name, it does not carry the prestige. Another example is seen even within academic circles and the lack of respect given to many degrees earned locally. If it is a degree from the West, many people think it must be better! Of course this is no longer as true as it used to be, especially since administrators in the government ministries found that the content of some courses from some colleges in the United States did not seem to be as rigorous as was expected. A third example is seen in industry. Until the late seventies, when most companies were "nationalized", the people in the board rooms of Nigerian companies, even the ones owned and funded by the Nigerian government were mostly Caucasians, except perhaps for one or two Nigerians in some managerial positions. The effect of the nationalization which put Nigerians in the top managerial positions was a folding of many businesses that had their parent companies in the West, again an example of the not-so-tacit belief in the West that Africans were incapable of holding managerial positions.

I recalled my history classes of two hundred or more students, then in a crammed hall. I recalled the content of the course, and how I must have inadvertently foisted on my students the notion that the West is better in my teaching or posture, as well as subscribing to terminologies like "the third world". As I reflected on this, I felt a sense of indebtedness to those students. I felt that I deprived them of a true account of the legacy of imperialism. And while the past is gone, this realization will inform my teaching in the future, wherever that may be.

One of the ways in which I examined the theme of power was also in the teacher - student relationship. As I reflect upon this theme, I question how I have exercised power and control in the past in my own teaching. While I would like to think that I have some similar personality traits as Liz's, the professor in this study, I wonder how students have perceived me, especially those in the courses where I was the professor! In spite of my attempts to be genuinely caring and be of help, did they perceive me as threatening or potentially repressive? Did male and female students perceive me differently? Was I viewed differently by my students who were Caucasians and those who were minorities? Perhaps an area of further research might be finding a way to understand how I perceive my exercise of power over my students, vis-à-vis how they perceive me exercising power in my role as teacher.

b. The Question of Trust

One of the themes that kept jumping out at me each time I went over transcripts or listened to tapes or read my own journal, was how very significant it was to build trust. "Trust comes... when you show them that you are valuing their differences..."; "...it's reassuring when you know you have the parents' trust..." "When I feel that they trust me, then we can plan together..." These excerpts from our group conversation transcripts portray the importance of this essential ingredient. While trust is essential in all human relationships, it seems that it is even more so in culturally diverse contexts because of inherent misunderstandings that can, and do result from such contexts.

Indeed one can say that a study of human relations in culturally diverse contexts is, in a sense, a study of how people learn to trust each other. On the one hand, trust says "Although we do not share the same cultural, racial or religious background, I can trust you to seek and serve my interests whether or not I'm present". On the other hand trust says, "you can trust me to seek your good and serve your interests as if they were my own, whether or not you are present". Thus when Nemo asks the question "But how can one become sensitive to another person if one has absolutely no knowledge or background of that person's way of life or heritage?" he was inquiring into how we can trust each other that we will seek each other's good in spite of our differences. As I reflect on the meaning of trust, which permeates most of the other themes, I question myself as to what trust means. Does it mean different things to different people? How does a teacher know when s/he is trusted if trust is a state of mind and we are unable read minds?

c. The Question of Negotiating Cultural Conflicts

Parents and teachers share a common interest in the welfare of children, but as portrayed by some examples in the study, they do not always agree on educational goals and practices; for instance Sam's anecdote about the conflict between an Arab father and a school teacher with regard to whether or not a student should swim. Different expectations, different belief and value systems, where these are held by both groups, are a potential source of disagreement, and an increased likelihood for mutual misinterpretation of each other's intentions and actions. The consequent cycle of blame and distrust can cause polarization between the two groups. Thus, an open communication with parents is essential in preventing misunderstanding. In such a situation it is important to have discussions about policies and curriculum in a "safe" environment where parents can present minority and possibly unpopular opinions.

Reflecting on this, as an educator, I wonder the extent to which I provide such a safe environment for my students, or even encourage them to be critical of policies or even my courses. As educators, I believe that we need to model how to be vulnerable to our students, and to allow them to learn from the way in which we handle such vulnerability. As educators, we actively present ourselves as people in control, and while a measure of this is important in order for students to have confidence in our teaching, what I have cherished the most in some of my own teachers is that element of vulnerability. It allowed me to not only see them as human and thus deepened my respect for them, but also enabled me to acquire some of the intangible learnings that are very peripheral to the courses taught. Particularly, I learned, by observing some of those teachers, how to allow myself to be vulnerable and still have my self-esteem intact.

My reflection on setting up a multiculturally oriented curriculum enabled me to understand that in itself, this may be a source of controversy. Because it challenges many prevailing attitudes and assumptions, its implementation may create some discomfort and concern for some parents and teachers. As I pondered on this, I remembered a workshop that I facilitated in a class of Early Childhood graduate students in 1991. This was an evening class, made up of mostly school teachers. My goal in the workshop was to raise more awareness to difficulties faced by children who are from cultural minorities in schools. I recalled that while some teachers seemed very appreciative of some of the new awarenesses that they had from the workshop, some were overtly antagonistic towards some of my proposals to go beyond the "dinner, dress and dance" notions that characterize many multicultural, once-in-a-year events in schools. There were comments like "we bend over backwards for these kids", "this is Canada, and in Rome, you do as the Romans do", and "you can't expect me to go to China and ask the whole society to adjust to my ways, I have to adjust to theirs".

Reflecting later on that workshop, I had a flash of insight, which was that the terms culture, race and class are loaded terms with multiple interpretations. To some people, they connote accusations of prejudice; to others they trigger fears of job discrimination and employment equity, where some have been known to say "these immigrants are coming to take our jobs"; and still to some, they symbolize isolation and alienation from the larger society, as seen in comments like "this is Canada, and we must be promoting one Canadian culture, instead of all these other little cultures". Such people point to the United States and subscribe to the myth of the melting pot, which tries to portray an "amalgamated American who is the same throughout the country" (Ramsey 1987, p.177). These people believe that as new immigrants arrive, they should "melt in" and not try to remain distinct. On the other hand, there are those minorities too, who want their children to "learn English" very quickly, so that they can be more accepted by society, and not suffer the types of discrimination that they have had to face. Like all people, the teachers in my workshop reacted in ways that reflect their personal histories and environment. The lessons of that workshop have remained with me over the years and if I were to do it again, I would approach it in a very different way.

When parents and teachers do not share a common background, they sometimes misunderstand the other's motives and actions. Teachers need to be better prepared to prevent and mediate misunderstandings by being knowledgeable about the values of communities that they serve.

As Paul said,

> ...[we] have to take into consideration what the turmoil [between the home and the school] is going to do to the child. The point is not that you abandon the rights of the child, but because of the physical reality that the child lives with the parents, then negotiation necessarily is slanted towards the parents, over the school's side...

3. As a Researcher

The Me in the Mirror: Coming to an Understanding of Collaboration

At the end of chapter three, I stated some of the assumptions that I had going into the study. In my original plan, I envisioned working collaboratively with teachers, who would have joint ownership of the research. Thus I expected that they would write in their journals regularly to record their growth and understanding. I had assumed that we could engage in collaboration in such a way that we could be very open with each other. I had assumed that I could provide an atmosphere of trust which would enable participants to trust each other enough to be very honest and open in discussing our heartfelt stories.

Although these assumptions were the cause of great frustrations and anxiety in my original plan, they still seemed very strong at the beginning of this study. Thus some of the frustrations which I experienced as the study evolved were a lack of recognition of the assumptions and the fact that I had taken very many issues for granted. Following are my reflections on each of these assumptions and my understanding of what it means to collaborate.

4. Reflections on my Assumptions

Firstly, what I had envisioned in collaborating with the teachers was to work together with the teachers in a joint venture. In doing this though, I had not given very serious thought to what it really means to work together. Collaboration has become one of those words used so frequently in the field of education and other circles that it has lost its true meaning. Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* (1986), defines collaboration thus: "to labor together", to work jointly [on something] to be jointly accredited ..." What does it mean to labor together with others in a collaborative venture? In a collaborative venture, one would expect a coming together of all the parties concerned to engage in a conversation about a project of interest, which could be initiated by any of the parties. If there is interest in the project, there might be a chat about what this might entail, who might be involved, what the various possibilities might be for implementation and monitoring, what possible problems might be encountered, what might be possible solutions to those problems. There might be a discussion of who would do what, and so forth.

In reflecting on my study, I saw the value in having a group of teachers who came together to dialogue about teaching in diverse cultural contexts. The conversations and the reflections that went hand in hand, were a type of co-laboring with others to express and listen to each others' understanding of what it means to work with children who are from different cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, I saw a major contradiction in what I had envisioned doing, and my own expectations. In working together with others, there is an openness to others, and while I was claiming to be open to the teachers' needs, I expected that the teachers would do what I wanted or expected, which was to write in journals to reflect on their professional growth. While some teachers wrote extensively in a journal, some did very little writing, which was a source of major frustration for me until I thought of using a tape recorder to capture some of the participants' thoughts. This new strategy was an acceptable alternative for some, for which they made themselves available, and was not for others, who simply were not able to find the time.

Secondly, I had thought that the participants would have equal ownership of the research. While this sounds like a modest thing to say, in reality it is not possible to make such a claim by virtue of the fact that this is a research tailored towards someone's doctoral degree - mine - and thus raises the question "who is going to get what out of this?" This reminds me of a story I recently heard about one of Hollywood's award ceremonies, where an actor who received an award had given a speech congratulating and applauding everyone on her team for working hard, and mentioned how it had been a very collaborative venture and how everyone had put in an equal amount of work, but then said she would be very happy to take, and keep this award in her home. Interestingly, although she had worked with others on the project, she was the one who was recognized and to whom the award had been given. This points to the fact that we must be careful about the claims that we make. Sumara & Luce-Kapler (1993) write about collaboration in action research projects:

> We believe that there has been a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of collaboration in action research. ...Collaboration seems to have become aligned with the idea of equal participation, responsibility and representation - all subsumed within a comfortable, friendly community of persons engaged in a mutually interesting project or endeavor. [Rather], ... collaborating within community should be understood as an activity which is at times likely to be *uncomfortable* rather than *comfortable*. (p.393).

As I indicated in chapter IV, under the title, "Role of the Researcher", the fact that conducting this research is ultimately for the purpose of obtaining a doctoral degree, there were some responsibilities that rested very squarely on my shoulders, and with those responsibilities came the burden, as it were, to guide and focus conversations on the issue at hand. As I reflect on this issue, some examples come to mind. When I told a story or related an anecdote, it was meant to trigger pertinent stories and when I asked a question, or sought points of clarification, they were meant to trigger responses about an issue of particular interest to the study. Thus although this pronouncement about "equal ownership" sounds "good", the question of how this operates in reality, given the raison d'être of the research, makes the notion of collaboration as a joint venture for joint recognition problematic.

Thirdly, I had assumed that I could build an atmosphere of trust which would enable participants to be open and honest in engaging in a deep dialogue with each other. This assumption suggests that gaining trust is only a matter of technique which I only needed to employ rather than a relationship that needs to develop out of an already existing state of mistrust. In reflecting about this I saw that building and maintaining an open and trusting atmosphere was something that we all had to bring about as individuals and as a group. Part of bringing this about depended on our posture and response to each other's questions and answers, on each other's tact in talking to each other, on how others perceive us as persons, as either threatening or non-threatening, on how they perceive the power relationships in the group, and even our dispositions, whether or not we are cynical people, and so forth. As such there are very many factors that encourage or discourage trust building, some have to do with the real, some with the perceived, and yet others with the imagined, and no one person can control all of these factors to bring about an atmosphere of trust and openness in others. In order for trust to occur, each individual must be tactful and responsible in one's relationship with other group members. And even then, what is perceived may still hinder total openness and trust as earlier discussed under the theme of power relations in the group.

Fourthly, another assumption that I had in my original plan, though unknown to me at the time, was that I could impose my agenda on the teachers in my study. My agenda was to prescribe, through a workshop format, how teachers should or should not relate to children from different cultural backgrounds. I had even envisioned that the teachers would each volunteer to do an action research project in their own classes to which I would invite myself and suggest ways of working more effectively with children from culturally different cultures. What arrogance! Reflecting on this as the study evolved, I saw how contradictory this tacit agenda was to my proclaimed collaboration, and just how much I had taken my colleagues, the teachers, for granted.

The initial difficulties meant abandoning the original plan, and searching for another plan. The principal's question as to whether or not I was looking for discrimination, and therefore to not bother to come to his school, the concern about timing and the nature of involvement for teachers all portray the reality of collaborating with others. These point to complex and contradictory experiences as opposed to some of the pleasant and positive dimensions of collaboration that we hear discussed often. However, as the study evolved, there were still assumptions about collaboration that I held but came to realize only through self-reflection.

Thus, seeing the me in the mirror revealed that I could no more legislate how teachers should relate to their students than I could create an atmosphere of trust! Although my understanding of my task at the outset of the research endeavor was to change the views of the teachers, the only convert I made may have been myself!

B. Implications of the Study

Although this study focuses on teachers of culturally different children and what they do to meet the learning needs of their students, I must indicate that teachers work within structural barriers in society that many are, and feel powerless to overcome. In the following paragraphs, I examine the implications of this study for educators with regard to what and how we teach, and in building bridges between the home and the school. I also discuss some implications for teacher education and for education policy.

1. For Educators

As educators, we bring biases to our teaching situations. These biases are a reflection of those of the society in which we live and work. Our expectations also reflect the biases that we have absorbed. If we expect girls to be passive and submissive, we will teach them in such a way, and be thrown off-guard when they do not fit our expectations. Our approaches and expectations may be unconscious or developed with good intentions, however, it is crucial to reflect upon our biases, which the most sensitive of us carry with us. In the study, teachers were shocked when they came to realize some of the biases that they have. It is important then to engage in a constant process of reflection to uncover the tacit assumptions that we bring with us. This study has implications for educators in what and how we teach, as well as possibilities for how we work with families.

a. What and How We Teach

This study has implications for all educators and for those who work with children in any capacity. It has implications for what we teach and how we teach. The tremendous power and influence that teachers have in the lives of their students calls for critical reflection and pedagogical responsibility in our praxis. Being reflective of our practice is an invitation to uncover our own assumptions in how we relate to our students as the cultural other. Critical reflection also invites us, as educators, to think of how we teach and the choices we make in what to teach.

Knowledge is not neutral, and yet as educators, we tend to treat it as if it were, in that we often choose to teach that which is less offensive and less controversial. Yet there is much in history that is full of great debates and controversies about people's struggles. While we may not be able to alter the inequities in society at large, choosing to present different perspectives of the ways in which different segments of society experience events may begin to encourage our students to be more questioning about what they read, hear or see. One of the goals of multicultural education cited in chapter two by Banks (1989), is to empower students to develop social action skills. Part of being socially active is to be able to view events from a variety of perspectives. In order to provide education that is multicultural and socially reconstructionist, we need to provide possibilities for social action for our students by moving away from what Freire (1988) calls "domesticating education" which emphasizes passivity, submissiveness and acceptance, into critical reflection which attempts to uncover underlying meaning of events and take action on inconsistencies that may be found.

Diversity issues, White privilege and minority disadvantage are often not talked about. When they are, they are talked about in general terms, in ways that will make people comfortable. Yet we cannot escape from the history and the issues that diversity tend to generate. I believe that this is one reason why discrimination on the basis of race, sex, socio-economic status, and ability are very subtle especially in Canada. The truth is that these issues do get talked about, but in a way that is destructive, rather than constructive. Perhaps one way to deal with covertness is to engage our students in a dialogue in the way that Nemo planned to do with his Arab students. Rather than deal with the racial tensions in schools as isolated cases by some trouble-makers as we often hear from the media, perhaps we need to make this a more explicit part of the curriculum, and help students see that these tensions are symptoms of deeper systemic problems. Like all activities that involve working with others, I do not say that this would be comfortable, but it may help both teachers and students to confront the constantly simmering pot of racial tensions.

b. Possibilities for Working with Parents

The question of trust seems to permeate the study. As educators, we live and work in a climate of mistrust. It is even more so in culturally diverse contexts. This study has implications for how we work with parents to alleviate their fear of our authority over the lives of their children. Openness and genuine communication are crucial in working with parents from culturally different backgrounds. The inability of many parents to speak English or to help their children at home must not be seen as a lack of interest of these parents in the education of their children. Parental involvement in the way that it is now defined does not take these parental limitations into consideration. Perhaps there are other ways in which parents who are unable to come to school or speak English can be encouraged to monitor the assignments that their children take home from school. Genuinely welcoming them to our classes when they come to school, whether or not they speak English can help lessen some of the anxiety that parents have about their children's teachers and schools.

We must also make efforts to respect the cultural differences that our students bring to school. Parents need to see that we are willing to negotiate conflicts. Negotiating conflicts such as the example Sam provided about swimming would go a long way to help parents feel a little more comfortable with us, as educators. Having said that, I must add that teachers must take on advocacy roles for children in those areas where the value system of a child's cultural background conflict strongly with their own personal values. Paul shared an instance of such conflict in his own teaching of a grade nine science class in south Texas. He had a female student who had a strong aptitude for science, particularly biology. She had won the local science fair and had various opportunities for scholarship. However, the expectation in her household was that she would go back to her home and look after her younger siblings and parents rather than go to university. The student's aspirations was for "a new way of life" according to Paul, and as he worked with the student, she mentioned that she would like to become a doctor if she is allowed to follow her interests in biology. Hearing this, and being aware of his own strong personal feelings that this student must be given the opportunity to have a choice, Paul worked hard to persuade her parents, finally striking a chord with them when he mentioned that she might one day come back to their community as a doctor. Since the community had no doctor, the parents felt good "about the idea of their daughter coming back to that community as the doctor". This is an example of some of the grey areas on which teachers of culturally diverse children have to make decisions daily. When such situations are not handled with care, they lead to confrontations between teachers and parents. Since it is the teacher's role to bring forth the best in each child, teachers must become pedagogically accountable in the advocacy of their students, and make attempts to present alternatives to parents for their consideration. As Paul puts it, "you have to be a salesperson if you are a teacher. You have to do your best to sell the kid to the parents."

Participants in this study describe, and demonstrate some of the characteristics that teachers of culturally different children need to have to be successful in working with their students. These characteristics include an attitude of respect for cultural differences, the ability to be comfortable in communicating with parents from other cultures, the ability to develop a relationship of trust with students and their parents, and a sensitivity to meeting the needs of individual children. Other characteristics would be the willingness to know the cultural resources that culturally different children bring to the classroom by knowing how to gain insight into the cultures represented in the class, and the ability to translate this knowledge into effective instruction. When teachers understand the cultural resources that their students bring into their classes, they are more able to select content and materials relevant to the different populations they teach. These cultural resources then serve as the foundation for new knowledge. Teachers cannot use a single instructional method if they hope to be effective in the multicultural classroom. Instead they need a repertoire of several instructional approaches with which students are already familiar. For example, students might prefer peer teaching rather than the question-answer method of the teacher. In other instances, a teacher might need to establish group projects, rather than individual projects to meet the needs of students who culturally work in groups. Moreover, the anecdote described by Paul earlier on points to the need for teachers to be skillful in interactive decision making, particularly in the area of being advocates for children.

2. For Teacher Education

When I look at the students and staff in the Faculty of Education, I am often baffled by the very few faces of people from minority cultural backgrounds. This is in antithesis to what I see when I visit schools and find a very large number of children who are from these backgrounds. Our education faculty and school teachers are not mirroring the diversity of children in schools.. I have often wondered why we are not preparing more teachers from minority cultural backgrounds. Is this because they did not apply to become teachers? While we cannot mandate that people from minority backgrounds apply to become teachers, we need to ask what message this lack sends to the children in the schools. The message could very well be that only a certain type of person can be a teacher. I taught in a program at the University of Alaska which actively recruits Alaska Natives into the education program. Are there such possibilities for recruiting First Nations peoples and other minorities here? In my experience, a large city is often a shocking place for some First Nations peoples, as is also probably the case with other people who might be traveling from a rural to an urban area for the first time. Providing distance educational opportunities within rural communities, or in prospective students' own familiar environment or milieu can allay fears of people for whom the city may pose a problem. The University of Alaska Fairbanks has such a system in place for students who prefer to pursue their education degrees in one of the rural campuses. For those Alaska Natives who traveled into Fairbanks to pursue education, the provision of a support system in which they interact with other Alaska Natives did go a long way to help them in their pursuit of knowledge.. This support system and continued communication with rural education faculty provide a source of encouragement for many Native students. This model of active recruitment of would be teachers from minority cultural backgrounds may provide a possible solution to the lack of minorities who apply to become students in the faculty of education at the University of Alberta. I must quickly add that a related issue is that of access to teaching positions after graduation in schools. I am personally aware of some people from minority cultural backgrounds who were prepared as teachers, but who were unable to find teaching positions, even though they held a teaching certificate. Many moved on to find positions in other fields after years of waiting to be called to teach without much success.

I also think of the content of some of our education courses, and wonder why there is not more being done about working with culturally diverse children. The Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Alberta offers some elective courses in multicultural education. I do not see any courses in both elementary and secondary education departments which directly address this focus. I believe that such a focus is greatly needed in these two departments since these departments are home to students who may eventually have their teaching positions in culturally diverse settings.

Another issue pinpointed by Clare in the study, is the need for more opportunity to dialogue with other teachers on the issue of educating culturally different children. She hoped that such an opportunity would continue with our group. It did not! We all disbanded and were preoccupied with other commitments. Clare's desire for such an opportunity points to the need for a support group where teachers can honestly dialogue about issues of difference. While teachers may have support groups that they go to for discussions on pedagogical issues, Clare may not have felt that she could connect with such a group if any does exist. Since people are summoned by different kinds of discourses, Clare seemed to need a group where she felt that others would have the same interests. This felt need by Clare also points to the lack of a mechanism within the educational system in which issues of difference, and perhaps other issues may be discussed. The School Boards as well as the Faculty of Education need to make an effort within their institutional structures to provide a mechanism through which this kind of need can be addressed. This study points to a need in our teacher education programs at our universities in Alberta to address the issue of difference. I spoke to many educators at the University of Alberta about this issue before my trip to Alaska, and I got the distinct impression that this issue is not a priority for the Faculty. And yet education students graduate and find themselves in a reserve or in a part of the city where they encounter diverse children. Are we doing them a favor? I believe that mandating courses in which cultural difference is discussed and examined would provide opportunities for preservice education students to confront these issues. In order to obtain an education certificate in the State of Alaska, it is mandatory for students to take courses in multicultural education and Land Settlement issues of Alaska Natives. These courses force many new teachers to the State, or preservice students to examine issues of how the cultures of their students intersect with their teaching. I taught two of the courses which served as a rude awakening for many who thought they were going to simply implement a curriculum. Confronting these issues in such mandated courses changed the way that many teachers had viewed teaching prior to coming to Alaska. This approach offers such a possibility here. Education students should be required to take courses in which issues of cultural differences are examined before graduation, or as a prerequisite for an Alberta Teacher's Certificate. The statistics presented in chapter one demonstrate that there is a shift in the demographics of Canada, in that more and more people from non-European countries are immigrating to this country. Since the children of these new immigrants are, and will be attending our schools, it is imperative for the field of education to seek ways to address what this means for preservice teachers as well as teachers who are already finding some of these children in their classrooms. A related issue is the need to have a culturally diverse faculty both in our universities and in our schools. This point is reiterated by the report of an inquiry appointed to look into a recent racial violence in a school in Nova Scotia. One of the many recommendations provided by the report is the urgent need to have a culturally diverse teaching staff in the school (CBC National News, August 27, 1997). Thus, our faculties of education and schools' teaching staff need to reflect the changes that we see occurring in the demography of the country.

As described earlier on, teachers need certain characteristics in order to be effective in working with children from other cultures. The field of teacher education needs to address how to help preservice teachers become more understanding, and move towards these characteristics. It is pertinent to point out here that the participants in the study are an atypical group. Most have been in situations where they have each been the minority. For each one, this experience of being the minority is what they pointed to as having made a difference in the way they perceive people who are culturally different. If having a minority status makes a difference in how people understand and interact with people from other cultures, how then do we reach all teachers? Is it possible to provide opportunities for each preservice teacher to be a minority during the period of their teacher preparation? How is it possible for people to experience being a minority?

C. Possible Areas of Further Research

Although I now write the concluding section to this study, I am left with many questions. The issue of how students perceive a teacher who is in a position of power is one possible area of research. Perhaps a dialogue with female university professors about how they view power issues and how they perceive themselves in a position of power would provide insight into this issue, particularly since some female professors do not see themselves as having power or even as being potentially repressive in their use of power.

Another possible area of research is related to the question asked by Clare: "what sensitizes mainstream children?" Perhaps a dialogue with other adults who have an interest in this area may give some insight into this question. I indicated earlier that what seemed to have made a difference for most participants is being a minority in one situation or another. This experience was not pleasant for many, and hence their sensitivity to people who are ethnic and cultural minorities. Do all mainstream children need to experience a similar experiment as that provided by Jane Elliot in the video *Eye of the Storm* described earlier?

Further, there is need for more collaborative research with prospective Canadian teachers in uncovering assumptions about cultural differences. Perhaps having students work in culturally diverse schools, and having them reflect on their assumptions and dialogue with others as they experience these children may be a starting point in uncovering those assumptions.

One other possible area of research is uncovering why we have very few teachers from minority cultural backgrounds. Delpit, in her book *Other People's Children* (1995), is alarmed by the decline of minority participation in the teaching force. While this has been an important issue in the United States, we have not paid much attention to the preparation of minorities here in Canada. Among other reasons provided by the teachers she interviewed, they felt that their experiences were not validated in teacher education programs, or even in their subsequent teaching lives. Moreover, they experienced negative and stereotypical racial and cultural attitudes both in their teacher preparation programs and teaching experiences. Could these also be reasons why we do not have students applying to become teachers here? How about those who already have teaching positions? Perhaps some of these problems might be unearthed if we have teachers share their experiences as minorities within their teaching environments.

One other possible area of research is on the phenomenon of "losing face". Nemo was concerned that the Arab students that were born and raised in Canada showed lack of sensitivity to other Arab children who had just immigrated to Canada. He wondered why that was the case, and thought that those raised here should be the ones to "provide a nice landing pad" for the ones who are just arriving. I seem to feel that these new students perhaps remind the ones raised here of attitudes and cultural characteristics that they would rather forget especially after having worked very hard to be accepted by members of the dominant culture here. This idea has not been tested. Asian students tend to be associated more with this phenomenon of *losing face*. Reflecting on Nemo's anecdote, I wonder whether this phenomenon is true for other minorities as well. This thus presents another possible area that is worth researching into.

The Federal Government policy on multiculturalism is now almost three decades old. One of my frustrations during the early literature search for this study was finding material that has comprehensive information about how the policy of multiculturalism has evolved in different parts of Canada. Researching into the evolution of this policy in different provinces would provide a valuable Canadian addition to the body of literature in this area.

Another possibility is to conduct research into how Canadian teachers are integrating multicultural education into their curriculum. According to Sleeter and Grant (1987, p.438) very few such studies exist in the United States. About ten years ago, Mock and Masemann (1986) published a report in which they documented what was occurring in education departments at various universities in the area of multicultural teacher education. They also provided information on the extent to which various universities and colleges were incorporating multicultural education into their teacher preparation programs. However, I am not aware of any publication that provides information about what teachers are doing in their classrooms in this regard in Canada. While some student teachers might have been exposed to multicultural education in their teacher preparation programs, probably few, if any, publications have documented what teachers are doing in their classes. A recent publication by Pawluk (1994) describes what she did to introduce multicultural literature to her grade twelve classroom in a Canadian school, and the responses of her students to the attempt. However, there seems to be a disturbing gap in the literature on research in this area, indicating a need for further Canadian research.

Let me end by recalling what Modgil, Verma, Mallick and Modgil (1986) stated about a decade ago. The wrote:

> Multicultural education is not about exotica but about *all* the people in a plural society and about the interdependent nature of the world. A rational debate on the issues ... should continue, without a degeneration of the debate into political rhetoric or dogma (p.16).

Of a truth, the debate on the kinds of tough issues raised in this study has continued. Now, more than ten years later, educating in culturally diverse settings continues to pose a growing challenge to educators in Canada, and perhaps in other parts of the western world. Many times, I feel that the debate has indeed degenerated into political rhetoric or dogma! While we must continue to welcome the debate, we must in the process not forget the children for whose sake we need to respond systemically to the challenge in the coming years. The recent racial violence among students in Nova Scotia is a reminder that these issues need to be addressed honestly by educators, administrators, teacher education institutions, parents, students and policy makers.

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APPENDIX 1

Invitation to Participate in a Seminar in Teaching Culturally Diverse Children

Have you had any experiences with teaching children from diverse cultural backgrounds? Would you welcome an opportunity to meet and connect with other teachers who have similar hopes, concerns, challenges and dilemmas in relation to their work with these children? Do you have ideas that have worked in your classroom that you would like to share with other teachers?

If you have answered "yes" to some or all of these questions, you are invited to participate in a collaborative research seminar during the Fall term. Students may register for University credit if desired.

THERE WILL BE AN ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING AT 7:00 P.M. ON SEPTEMBER 8TH IN ROOM 548 EDUCATION SOUTH, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA. If you would like more information, please call Rachel Adeodu at 436-0826.

APPENDIX 2

Dept. of Elementary Education
951A Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB

September 17, 1992

Dear Folks,

I am writing to ask you to sign the following form that states that you read this letter and agree to the conditions, in accordance with both the University of Alberta's and the Department of Elementary Education's ethics standards. In general the letter states that the information gathered in the seminar, ED EL 595, and related activities will be used in my Ph.D. thesis.

You may withdraw from the research project at any time without jeopardizing the credit for the course (if you are taking it for credit), by talking with me. If for any reason you deem it necessary to withdraw, you have to follow the University of Alberta guidelines and dates published in the calendar. If you participate in the research, you are guaranteed anonymity. In the thesis, you will be identified as a member of a class in a Canadian university.

I ______________________ understand that ED EL 595, Seminar in Teaching Culturally Diverse Children: A Collaborative Exploration, will be used to gather data for Rachel Adeodu's Ph.D. thesis. I also understand how I may withdraw from the project/course.

____________________ (Date) ____________________(Signature)

APPENDIX 3

University of Alberta
Department of Elementary Education
ED EL 595

Seminar in Teaching Culturally Diverse Children: A Collaborative Exploration

Time: TBA	Rachel Adeodu
Room 203, Ed. Sth.	951A Ed. Sth
Winter, 1992	492-5059

Seminar Objectives

This seminar is designed to explore teachers' understandings, hopes, challenges and dilemmas of teaching children from diverse cultural backgrounds. It is intended to achieve the following objectives.

1. To explore one's own implicit and explicit knowledge of children from diverse cultural backgrounds.

2. To become aware of factors that may have shaped one's knowledge or understanding of cultural differences.

3. To share experiences, challenges and dilemmas in relation to one's work with children from a variety of cultures.

4. To explore a variety of strategies of working more effectively with children from diverse cultural backgrounds.

5. To develop an awareness of resources and the effective utilization of such resources.

6. To extend educators ability to create and select appropriate materials for a multicultural classroom.

Seminar Content

This seminar will reflect interests and needs that will evolve from the group. We will meet ten times throughout the Fall term.

References

There is no one textbook required for this seminar, however selected articles and handouts will be available. Please find attached a list of articles and books that are relevant to the seminar.

Reflections

Documenting your concerns, reflections, and reactions will become a record of your personal journey throughout the period. It can reflect not only what we do in class, but may also become a way to reflect on your beliefs about diversity, teaching a class of children from diverse cultures, your hopes, challenges and dilemmas as a teacher, and how you are endeavoring to bring a multicultural perspective to your classroom or school.

University Credit

If you wish to obtain University credit, in addition to participation in the seminar, you would be expected to do the following:

1. Officially register for Independent Study in ED EL 595, Lec. X3.

2. Critique and react to five journal articles or chapters read for this seminar.

3. Document in some way, some of your most successful classroom experiences for publication in a journal or a handbook.

Evaluation

Evaluation will be based on a **CREDIT/NON-CREDIT** rating.

Appendix 4

List of Journals Articles

Banks, J. (1991). Multicultural Education: For Freedom's Sake. Educational Leadership, 49(4), 32-35.

Bullard, S. (1991). Sorting Through the Multicultural Rhetoric. Educational Leadership, 49(4), 4-7.

Clark, L., DeWolf, S. & Clark, C. (1992). Teaching Teachers to Avoid Having Culturally Assaultive Classrooms. Young Children, 47(5), 4-9.

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Phillips, C. (1988). Nurturing Diversity for Today's Children and Tomorrow's Leaders. Young Children. 43(2), 42-47. Washington, D C